

University of Alberta

Irish Travelling Musicians of the First Half of the Nineteenth Century

by

Jennifer Sue Gregory



A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

Department of Music

Edmonton, Alberta

Spring 2001



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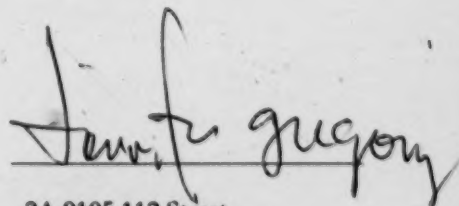
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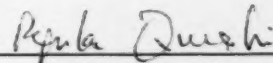
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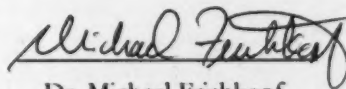
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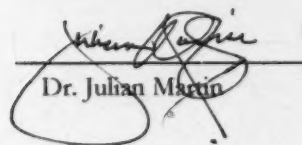
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Abstract

IRISH TRAVELLING MUSICIANS IN THE FIRST HALF OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

This thesis attempts to suggest a new direction in Irish musical studies. The Irish travelling musician of the first half of the nineteenth century is examined through the use of contemporary sources. My research inquires into the effects of a nationalist elite agenda involved in the sources of this era, how these musicians are described in this literature and finally expands to include the historical conditions in which the musicians lived.

Pulling together historical, economic and political aspects of nineteenth-century society provides some of the information needed to place the musician and his practices in their contextual circumstances. This approach is essential to the understanding of any musician and the music they produce. A historical materialist perspective can be a useful tool to broaden the scope of Irish music studies.

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INTRODUCTION

Understanding Nineteenth-Century Irish Musicians and their Repertoire

With the recent popularity of Celtic music, there has been a reawakened interest in Irish musical studies. The bulk of this literature is focused on playing styles and technique (deconstructing the audio elements of Irish performance practice) and examining the existing repertoire for its political and romantic nature. With the focus being primarily on the music, the musicians seem to be overlooked. While studies in content and style are essential, an understanding of the musicians must be reached in order to make significant progress in Irish music studies.

The musician and their music seem to be given separate lives but one could not exist without the other. It makes sense that these two elements must be brought together as they exist in practice when pursuing scholarship. Mediating circumstances that affect one element will naturally affect the other. It is with this realisation that I endeavour to add to the existing literature on Irish music with a study of the relatively neglected musician. My work is intended to stimulate thought and encourage scholarship while welcoming all the factors that impact Irish music.

Topic

This thesis focuses on the Irish travelling musician, not the music they produced. While the absence of music may seem strange in a music study, I contend that it is not always necessary for its inclusion in order to advance the knowledge used to understand

musical literature. I have chosen the Irish travelling musician of the first half of the nineteenth century for several significant reasons. Firstly, the presence of the itinerant musician is much more documented and these resources are more accessible for my research. Also the term "travelling" refers to the mobility of the musician; the degree of mobility is not set and allows for a flexibility that will be needed to draw sufficient parallels to Irish society with the fragmented sources on these musicians. The travelling musician is both the subject and object of my study. These musicians become objectified when the theoretical framework (discussed below) comes to the forefront of the study.

While travelling musicians were more than just labourers, music was a service provided in exchange for the means to survive. Temporal circumstances affected the practices of the musician and their music. Looking through the economic, social, political and other contextual processes, I endeavour to establish the ground work needed in order to perceive the rationale of the travelling musician's practices. This preliminary study is an initiative towards the development of an approach to general music studies. I wish to put forward ideas for consideration that will inspire this new direction in research.

Domain

The time period chosen is significant in many ways. The first half of the nineteenth century was a politically charged time that introduced lasting effects on Irish music heard and discussed up to the present day. While I am sure that no one would dispute the presence of historical origins of the musician's practices and music, little work has been done in this area. I have chosen to study this era because I believe it is a fundamental step in the study of at least two centuries of Irish music. Due to the political character of the

nineteenth century, the information provided by contemporary sources brings the ideological frames to the forefront. While I attempt to call attention to these constructions, my exploration of their effects is limited given the preliminary nature of my study.

Theory and Method

This thesis gathers the necessary information needed in a historical materialist analysis of the practices of the travelling musician. Historical materialism examines the affect of previous historical circumstances on the way a society is actualised. The theory looks at the material realities and constraints of a society to determine the kind of practices that developed out of necessity. This approach seems best suited to bring the conditional elements of the travelling musician and his practices to the surface where they can be analysed. My undertaking in this work deals primarily with the first steps involved in demonstrating how a historical materialist approach can serve to advance a contextual analysis and encourage further research in along these lines.

This study uses primary and secondary sources to start in the reconstruction of a social history of the travelling musician. The travelling musician and his predecessor, the harper, are sketched out by the available information found in mostly nineteenth-century contemporary literature. The first and fourth chapters are dedicated to outlining the some of the contextual layers in operation. In the last chapter these elements are pulled together, to a limited extent, to reflect how historical materialist perspective may enlighten an understanding of the nineteenth-century travelling musician.

Sources

The sources used for information on musical practices are drawn from diverse written genres. The following table includes an example for each type of source consulted.

Table 0.1
Types of Sources on Music

Type of Source	Example of Sources Used
Music collections:	Edward Bunting's <i>The Ancient Music of Ireland</i> (1840)
Travelogues:	Arthur Young, <i>A Tour in Ireland, 1776-1779</i>
Memoirs:	Arthur O'Neill <i>Memoirs</i> (1803)
Literary accounts:	William Carleton, <i>Traits and Stories of the Irish Peasantry</i> (1845), and <i>Tales and Sketches Illustration the Character of the Irish Peasantry</i> (1869)
Contemporary journal articles:	William Allingham, "Irish Ballad Singers and Irish Street Ballads", <i>Household Words</i> (1852)
Anthology (collection) of primary source material:	Padraic Colum, <i>A Treasury of Irish Folklore</i> (1954)
Secondary sources with heavy reference and quotation of primary sources:	Captain Francis O'Neill, <i>Irish Minstrels and Musicians</i> (1913)
Articles based on contemporary documentation:	Maura Murphy, "The Ballad Singer and the Role of the Seditious Ballads in Nineteenth-Century Ireland: Dublin Castle's View", <i>Ulster Folklife</i> , (1979)
Twentieth-century scholarly literature:	Brendan Breathnach, <i>Folk Music and Dances of Ireland</i> (1977)
Twentieth-century scholarly articles:	Colin Neilands, "Irish Broadside Ballads: Performers and Performances", <i>Ulster Folk Life</i> , (1991)

In order to acquire the necessary information to provide this context, I have drawn on a substantial amount of literature, both primary and secondary, on subjects including politics, economy, agriculture, social structures, mode of production, and gender roles.

Table 0.2
Types of Context-Related Sources

Type of Source	Example of Sources Used
Travelogues/folk documentation:	Thomas Crofton Croker, <i>Researches in the South of Ireland</i> (1824)
Contemporary scholarly books on Ireland:	Edward Wakefield, <i>An Account of Ireland, Statistical and Political</i> (1812)
Contemporary journal articles:	"An Irish Pig-Fair". <i>Chambers' Edinburgh Journal</i> (1846)
Economy:	Liam Kennedy and Phillip Ollerenshaw eds. <i>An Economic History of Ulster, 1820-1940</i> (1985)
Secondary sources with heavy reference and quotation of primary sources:	Howard Mumford Jones, "Origins of the Colonial Idea in England", <i>Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society</i> (1942)
Articles based on contemporary documentation:	Stephen Nicholas and Peter R. Shergold, "Irish Intercounty Mobility before 1840", <i>Irish Economic and Social History</i> (1990)
Twentieth-century scholarly literature:	R. F. Foster, <i>Modern Ireland 1600-1972</i> (1989)
Twentieth-century scholarly articles:	Robbie McVeigh, "The Specificity of Irish Racism", <i>Race & Class</i> (1992)
Statistical maps:	Gearóid Ó Tuathaigh, <i>Ireland Before the Famine 1798-1848</i> (1972)

Major Primary Sources

*William Carleton*¹

William Carleton (1794-1869) was an important documentor of the Irish peasantry and is a primary source for information on travelling musicians. The works that I draw from are the following: *Trails and Stories of the Irish Peasantry* (1830-3) and *Tales and Sketches Illustrating the Character of the Irish Peasantry* (1845). Born in county Tyrone, Carleton grew up as the son of a poor tenant farmer. Carleton's father was a storyteller or *senachie* fluent in both Irish Gaelic and English. Carleton describes his father's memory as "not merely great or surprising, but absolutely astonishing," a "perfect storehouse."² It is through his father that Carleton first received his knowledge of Irish legends, tales, traditions, historical anecdotes, customs, and superstitions. Being less fluent in English than Gaelic, Carleton's mother, Mary Kelly, was a well-known singer in the community.

William Carleton had extensive experience with the Irish peasantry not only through his parents but also within his community and through his extensive attendance of hedge schools.³ Carleton was to enter the priesthood but after securing tuition⁴ for scholarly

¹ For more information on William Carleton refer to the following articles: Eileen Ibarra, "William Carleton: An Introduction". *Éire-Ireland* 5, no. 1 (spring 1970): 81-86.; David Krause, "William Carleton, Demiurge of Irish Carnival: Fardorougha the Miser, 1839". *Éire-Ireland* 29, no. 4 (winter 1994): 24-46.; Barry Sloan, "Mrs. Hall's Ireland". *Éire-Ireland* 19, no. 3 (fall 1984): 18-30.; Sullivan, Eileen. "William Carleton: Artist of Reality". *Éire-Ireland* 12, no. 1 (1977): 130-140. and Maureen Waters, "William Carleton: A Divided Tradition". *Canadian Journal of Irish Studies* 10, no. 2 (December 1984): 27-36.

² William Carleton, *Traits and Stories of the Irish Peasantry*, (London: William Tegg, 1869), viii.

³ Hedge schools were Catholic schools that were held in makeshift classrooms that took place in a barn or hedge. Because of strict penal laws forbidding the education of children in Catholic schools, there was a need to be secretive (Breathnach, 50.)

studies and travelling many years as a poor scholar attending many hedge schools, he converted to become a Protestant and discarded his earlier aspirations.

Drawing on his experiences of Irish peasantry life, Carleton found employment as a writer for the *Christian Examiner*, and in addition to writing the works mentioned above, he wrote several novels. It is clear from the statements that Carleton makes in *Traits and Stories of the Irish Peasantry*, that Carleton feels that he is an objective observer capable of describing the Irish peasantry as they really were.

...there exists no people whose character is so anomalous as that of the Irish, and consequently so difficult to be understood, especially by strangers, it becomes a still more appropriate duty on my part to give to the public, proofs sufficiently valid, that I come to a subject of such difficulty with unusual advantages on my side, and that, consequently, my exhibitions of Irish peasant life, in its most comprehensive sense, may be relied on as truthful and authentic.⁵

There certainly are critics who would agree with Carleton's contentions. W. B. Yeats called Carleton "the historian of his class"⁶ and Maureen Waters calls his *Traits and Stories of the Irish Peasantry* "a prime source of information on the language and culture of pre-famine Ireland."⁷ While Carleton's experiences cannot be disputed, he was, however, a man "divided"⁸ between "two cultures".⁹ Carleton being familiar with both the English and Gaelic parts of Ireland must have felt pressure to be taken seriously as a writer which led

⁴ Carleton secured tuition from a wealthy farmer named Piers Murphy, near Corcreagh. (Carleton, xvii.)

⁵ Carleton, vii.

⁶ W.B. Yeats ed., *Representative Irish Tales*, First Series, (n.d.) I, 8; quoted in Eileen Ibarra, "William Carleton: An Introduction", *Éire-Ireland* 5, no. 1 (spring 1970), 85.

⁷ Maureen Waters, "William Carleton: A Divided Tradition", *Canadian Journal of Irish Studies* 10, no. 2 (December 1984), 27.

⁸ Ibid.

him to lean toward the perspective of the Protestant Irish elite. Even though Carleton's beginnings were close to the peasantry, his perspective changed as he met and socialised with those in this Irish elite. Although in his childhood years he was a part of the Irish peasantry, his education and later experiences created a distance that allowed him to take on an outsider perspective with insider experiences. This combination was realised in Carleton's works by the addition of statements that were colonial in attitude. Carleton occasionally portrays the Irish peasantry as simplistic and irrational.

...they can not fail to impress an observing mind with the obvious truth, that a nation of people so thoughtless and easily directed from the serious and useful pursuits of life to such scenes, can seldom be industrious and wealthy, nor, despite their mirth and humour, a happy people.¹⁰

In the preceding paper we have given an authentic account...the country folks...[they] appeared to be simple-minded...exhibiting all those minute and subordinate details which, by an arrangement naturally happy, and without concert, go to the formation of truth. There was, however, but one drawback in the matter, and that was the ludicrous and inadequate nature of the moral motive; for what unsteady and derogatory notion of Providence must we not entertain when we see the order and purpose of his divine will so completely degraded and travestied, by the fact of a human soul returning to this earth again, for the ridiculous object of settling the claim to a pair of breeches?¹¹

The tone of Carleton's writing depended on which magazine he wrote for and who was the intended audience. Although Carleton's contribution the documentation of the Irish peasantry and musicians is invaluable, there are certain limitations.

⁹ Barry Sloan, "Mrs. Hall's Ireland," *Éire-Ireland* 19, no. 3 (fall 1984), 61.

¹⁰ Carleton, 340.

¹¹ William Carleton, *Tales and Sketches Illustrating the Character of the Irish Peasantry*, (Dublin: J. Duffy, 1845), 70-1.

Captain Francis O'Neill

Captain Francis (Daniel) O'Neill (1848(9)-1936) was born in a Gaelic speaking area of county Cork to a well-educated family. O'Neill gained most of his experience with travelling musicians inside the house he grew up. Often his house was the location for many dances and for musical enjoyment. Exposure to music also came through learning to play the flute. After moving to Chicago in 1871, O'Neill started to collect tunes and write about Irish music. The works *Irish Minstrels and Musicians* (1913) and *Irish Folk Music* (1913) are referred to frequently throughout my thesis.

Irish Minstrels and Musicians is an amalgamation of many different sources, and it is only occasionally clear when O'Neill is speaking from his own personal experience and when he is drawing from another source. While sometimes he does acknowledge the source of his information within the text, often he weaves in and out of the writings of other scholars on a subject without giving a citation. O'Neill's sources are credited through the use of a list that precedes the "Contents" page. These pages, given the heading "Authorities Quoted", list ninety-four sources ranging in publication dating from 1584-1907 (a span of just over three centuries). Since the author of the information can not always be determined, this information must be handled with extra scrutiny. Working with many of the same sources that O'Neill did, I can see that he does not compromise the integrity of his sources, often quoting extended paragraphs. Although it would be preferable that all his sources were cited when they are used, this does not take away from the quality of the information provided in this amalgamation of source material.

Even less information and documentation is given for *Irish Folk Music*. It contains no list of sources used but despite this O'Neill's works have been given great respect in the

Irish scholarly literature, O'Neill is considered an excellent compiler of information known about specific musicians.

One mention is made of the collections produced by O'Neill in Patrick Weston Joyce's *Old Irish Folk Music and Songs* (1909).

I have examined the collection lately published by Captain Francis O'Neill of Chicago—"The Music of Ireland"—and I do not think I have reproduced any of his airs...¹²

In this passage Joyce compares O'Neill to himself and gives O'Neill credit as a valid collector of traditional Irish musical repertoire. Since O'Neill's two above mentioned works came out in 1913, Joyce was not able to comment on them.

Thomas Crofton Croker¹³

Born in county Cork, Croker (1798-1854) was the son of an army officer. He became a clerk in the admiralty in London from 1818-50. Travelling extensively throughout the west of Ireland, Croker collected stories and songs (which he sent to Thomas Moore): The following works are used as sources in my thesis: *Researches in the South of Ireland* (1824), *Fairy Legends and Traditions of the South of Ireland* (1825), *Legends of the Lake, or, Sayings and Doings at Killarney* (1829) and *Popular Songs of Ireland* (1839). These works were popular and widely read when they were first published. Contemporary and later critics, however, doubt

¹² P. W. Joyce, *Old Irish Folk Music and Songs* (1909; Reprint: New York: Cooper Square Publishers, Inc., 1965), vi.

¹³ For more information on Thomas Crofton Croker refer to the following articles: N. C. Hultin, "Anglo-Irish Folklore from Clonmel: T.C. Croker and British Library Add. 20099". *Journal of Folklore Studies* 27, no. 3-4 (1986): 288-307.; N. C. Hultin, "Mrs. Harrington, Mrs. Leary, Mr. Croker, and the "Irish Howl". *Éire-Ireland* 20, no. 4 (winter 1985): 43-64. and N. C. Hultin, "The Belief and Interpretation in T. Crofton Croker's *Legends of the Lake*". *Folklore* 98, no. 1 (1987): 65-79.

Croker's fidelity to his sources.¹⁴ In Neil C. Hultin's article "Anglo-Irish Folklore from Clonmel: T. C. Croker and British Library Add. 20099", Hultin states how Croker approached his writing. Very often he would take notes and gather material from the people (not necessarily the peasantry),¹⁵ then reconstruct the tales and information according to a notion of proper style and form (see **Chapter One** for more on the agenda of the national intelligentsia). In the case of *Fairy Legends and Traditions of the South of Ireland*, Croker lost the original manuscript for the first volume but had no qualms with the reconstruction of this volume based on vague memories and help from his friends.¹⁶



Since this work is a source-based historical study, I have outlined the main nineteenth-century contemporary writers on music in order to examine their value and deficiencies. This thesis while using source material, aims to illuminate the possible political biases that must be acknowledged and qualified in future studies in this area.

In **Chapter One** the focus is on the political conditions of the nineteenth century and its influence on written literature produced in the first half of the nineteenth century. The national elite (authors of contemporary literature) are examined along with their agenda. The intention of the chapter is to make the reader aware of the politics needed to interpret the nineteenth-century sources used in this thesis and to give some information on the

¹⁴ S. J. Connolly, "Croker, Thomas Crofton" in *The Oxford Companion to Irish History*, edited by S. J. Connolly (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 127.

¹⁵ Croker relied upon the gentry to get the majority of the folk tales he collected. (Neil C. Hultin, "Anglo-Irish Folklore from Clonmel: T. C. Croker and British Library Add. 20099", *Journal of Folklore Studies* 27, no. 3-4 (1986), 290.)

¹⁶ Ibid.

political circumstances. **Chapter Two** examines the literature on the pre-nineteenth century Irish harper as a transition into the practices of the travelling musician.

In the third chapter, the practices (both musical and otherwise) are outlined for each of the different types of travelling musicians. The travelling instrumentalists (piper and fiddler), dancing master, and the ballad singer are each described. **Chapter Four** lays out the some of the necessary information and background needed to give a context to an exploration of the practices of the travelling musician.

Chapter Five examines the practices of the travelling musicians using a historical materialist perspective. While the rationale for the development of certain musical practices can not be determined, the chapter is suggestive of how further study can be done in this area. Finally the **Conclusion** brings all the above information into its proper perspective and ties these chapters into a coherent whole with a discussion of the future implications of this work.



CHAPTER ONE

NINETEENTH-CENTURY POLITICS AND IRISH SONG COLLECTIONS

The Politics of Nineteenth-Century Literature

In order to understand the sources that I have used to reconstruct the lives of the travelling musician, it is necessary to give a general introduction to Ireland in the nineteenth century. While **Chapter Four** deals with setting up the physical conditions in which the travelling musician lived, it does not give attention to nineteenth-century politics and the presence of an agenda. Political ideas play a very real role in the shaping of Irish society. I will cover the politics involved in nineteenth-century literature in the ensuing pages. First I will explore the national elite, those that were responsible for the literature produced and published in this century. The Irish elite's objective will be outlined as well as the conditions that made the formation of this elite group necessary, including a description of the colonial environment that impacted both Catholics and Protestants.

The Irish Social Elite

Those responsible for the creation and maintenance of a political agenda in Ireland were members of its elite. Emerging in the eighteenth century, this group included professionals and landed elite of Norman, Old English¹ or Cromwellian descent² and in a

¹ The Normans were the first conquerors of Ireland in the twelfth century. Old English were the descendants of the Anglo-Norman conquerors inhabiting many towns and the Pale (see Glossary). Normans conquered England under William the Conqueror in 1066 and later in the twelfth century they vanquished Ireland (see **Glossary** for citations).

few cases some were of ancient Gaelic descent.³ What defined this body, according to R. F. Foster's *Modern Ireland 1600-1972*, was its association with Anglicism,⁴ their unified religion and the exclusivity of the group.⁵ These men (for the most part)⁶ were generally university-educated, and because their heritage was Protestant,⁷ by the 1790s the social elite was also known as the "Protestant Ascendancy".⁸ The reason that the elite emerged as mostly Protestant (in the eighteenth century and at the beginning of the nineteenth century) is because the British government had enacted Penal Laws (1692-1829) to eliminate the possibility of the formation of a native Catholic elite.⁹ Catholics (who refused to convert) were deprived from having careers or positions of power (in the army and in politics), they

² Oliver Cromwell (1599-1658) invaded and conquered several counties of Ireland in the seventeenth century. His son Henry (1628-74) was his successor in Cromwell's mission. These Protestants forcibly removed Catholics from their land and imprisoned the clergy. Plantations were developed with the approval of the English government. (Hiram Morgan, "Cromwellian land settlement" in *The Oxford Companion to Irish History*, edited by S.J. Connolly (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 128.)

³ These men descended from the Milesian race (see **Glossary**). (R. F. Foster, *Modern Ireland 1600-1972* (New York: Penguin Group, 1989), 170.)

⁴ Anglicism is the acceptance of the English language and their rule, in addition to an appropriation of English customs and culture.

⁵ Foster, 170.

⁶ Notable women of the social elite were Maria Edgeworth, Mrs. S. C. Hall and Lady Morgan.

⁷ These migrants came from England and some were from Scotland. Land was confiscated and given over to Protestant owners in the mid- to late seventeenth century. Although some Catholics did convert to Protestantism, the majority of the Protestant population came from outside of the country.

⁸ Foster, 170.

⁹ Richard Ned Lebow, *White Britain and Black Ireland: The Influence of Stereotypes on Colonial Policy* (Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1976), 95.

were obstructed from owning land and firearms, and education in Catholic schools was illegal.

Since the national social elite was well educated and came mostly from families of wealth, they had the luxury of time to look at ideological and political issues as opposed to the subsistence concerns of the peasantry. These men were not only aware of recent events like the American War of Independence (1775-1783) and the French Revolution (1789-1799) but they also theorised about the implications that similar revolts might have in Ireland's situation.

As nationalism advanced in the early nineteenth century the Irish elite matured and grew stronger.¹⁰ The elite had a lot of control over published material (Dublin had a flourishing printing industry) and as the group grew they consolidated their goals creating an agenda.

The Position of the Irish Social Elite

While the elite had a position of power and influence over their own countrymen, they did not, however, have the authority to translate their interest into Irish law. English mistrust and the desire to keep power in England were obstacles for this elite to having a great degree of authority. The elites that held positions in the Irish parliamentary system (in Dublin for example) had limited power. The real power to make decisions and policies came from those governing the Irish parliament from Westminster, England. Positions of authority were intentionally given to English applicants over fully qualified Protestants in

¹⁰ The national elite increased in number with the Catholic Emancipation Act of 1829. After this event Catholics could be a part of this group.

Ireland. The English monopolised Irish jobs and this recognition caused a great deal of hostility and the need to call to action an agenda that would rectify the situation. An anti-English sentiment started to fester out of the political and social insecurity¹¹ of the Irish elite. What follows is the social elite's strategy to establish sovereign powers in Ireland and create an elevated position for themselves within Ireland and England.

The Nationalist Agenda as seen through Nineteenth-Century Music Collections

Song collectors and compilers were a part of the national elite. These men used song collections as an effective form of propaganda to promote and disseminate their agenda. Music collections are given special attention in this chapter because they are an integral source for information on the practices of musicians. Collections also served to illuminate the agenda that is not as apparent in other writings about music and musicians. In the following section, I will outline the nationalist agenda using supportive evidence found mostly in the musical literature of the time. The intention of this deliberate pairing is to demonstrate how entwined politics was with music in the nineteenth century. The majority of collections included introductions that clearly outline an agenda and the method for its attainment. For the most part, the sources quoted will be from the first half of the century (to stay within the scope of the thesis).

The Agenda

Even though the political goals of the national agenda continued to develop throughout the century, their ambition was to acquire the power they needed as a means to obtain their own independence from England. A desire for more power can be seen in the

¹¹ Ibid., 176.

elites' demand for prestige, wealth, the elimination of oppression and their longing for equality. Below is a simplified outline of some of the stages in the agenda needed for the Irish elite to gain power.

Stages of the National Elite's Agenda

1. Create a distance between the elites and the natives of Ireland.
2. Break free of the confining English stereotypes and point to the positives in Irish culture.
3. The elites step in to represent the Irish people.
4. Gain the respect of England by redefining what "Irishness" means.
5. Gain the support of the Irish population (the peasantry) to form a united front in their political efforts (in the form of an anti-English sentiment).
6. Start to rectify injustices occurring in Ireland.¹²
7. The restoration of parliamentary power to Ireland and its people.¹³

The national elite used songs and song collections to aid them in the first five of these steps. In the second half of the nineteenth century the political agenda developed to include a specific Irish nationalism (which is not in the scope of my endeavour here).

Creating a Distance between Elite and Native

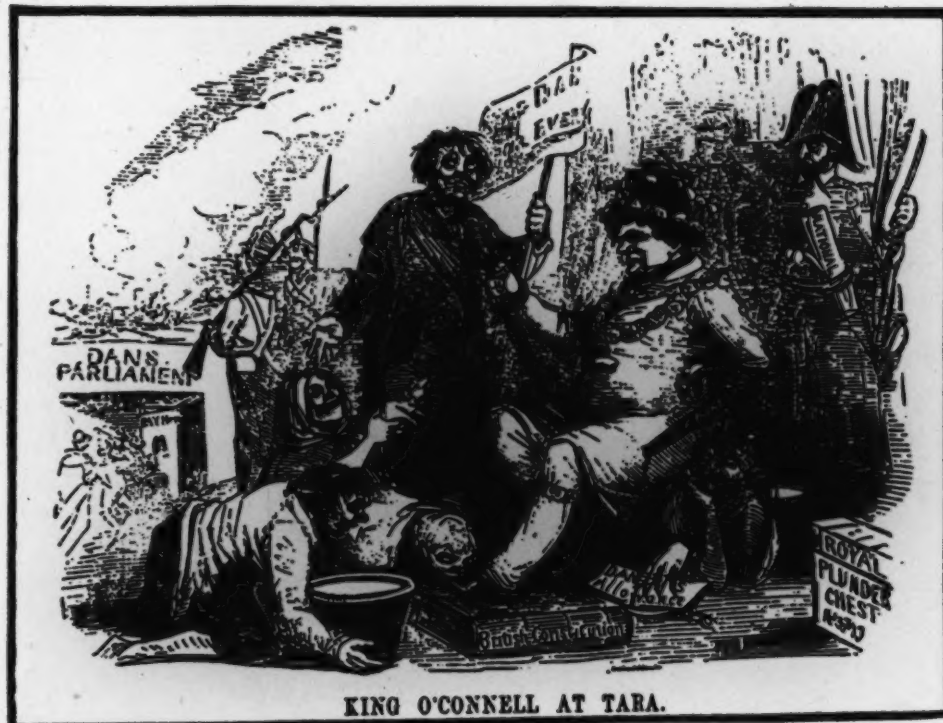
One way that the Irish elite tried to gain the trust and respect of England is by taking a similar stance with the native peasantry. As the colonisers of the peasantry population, the Irish Protestant Ascendancy appropriated the existing Irish stereotypes, from the English, to cast at their fellow countrymen. Since the British perceived the Irish as a body of people fitting an exaggerated abhorrent lifestyle, it would only harm the elite's progress to ally

¹² Injustices suffered by the Catholic peasantry, like land ownership laws and general human rights, were pursued by the elite in order to gain the support of the lower classes.

¹³ In the first half of nineteenth century the notion of a complete separation of all of Ireland from England was not yet a political goal.

themselves with this marginalized group. **Figure 1.1** depicts Daniel O'Connell and his followers in the satirical magazine *Punch* (1843).

Figure 1.1¹⁴
Daniel O'Connell as an Irish Stereotype



This satirical cartoon depicts O'Connell as a king to the Irish people holding a great deal of power, promoting violence as seen by the armed soldiers in the background and the cudgel in his hand. O'Connell also features a necklace of what seems to be potatoes (possibly symbolising the Irish people) strung together. The hooded figure offering O'Connell a sacrifice (a rat or piglet) demonstrates the primitive nature of the Irish. The illustration

¹⁴ Lebow, 54.

obviously depicts more than just the Irish stereotype, but its political message will not be examined here.

The nationalist elite elevated themselves to a position where they would have more power to slowly change the English perception of the Irish.¹⁵ Before outlining how the elite (through song collections) distanced themselves from the stereotype of the Irish, I will first describe the Irish stereotype.

A "Perceptual Prison"—Describing the "Irish" Stereotype

The peasantry of Ireland were caught in what Richard Ned Lebow calls a "perceptual prison".¹⁶ This prison held its shape in the form of damaging stereotypes actively developed and circulated by the English since the twelfth century. Initially the focus was on the pagan rooted beliefs of the native Irish, which was seen as a form of barbarism. The stereotype grew to include a conception of the Irish as uncivilised, ignorant, superstitious, religious, cunning, and violent alcoholics.

...the wild Irish, as unreasonable beasts, lived without any knowledge of God or good manners, in common of their goods, cattle, women, children and every other thing...nor yet any justice executed for murder, robbery, or any other like mischief; but the more force had ever the more reason. And hereof it followed that because their savage and idle life could not be satisfied with the only fruit of the natural unlaboured earth, therefore continually they invaded the fertile possessions of their neighbours that inhabited the...English pale...¹⁷

¹⁵ The elite defined "Irish" as including the qualities of the elite and not those of the peasantry.

¹⁶ Lebow, 73.

¹⁷ The English Pale (also known as the Pale and the Old (English) Pale) is an area of land which included counties Dublin, Louth, Meath, and parts of Kildare where the English first gained control in the eleventh century. It is here that the most dense Anglo-Norman settlement existed. (see **Glossary** for citations) William Thomas, *The Pilgrim: A Dialogue on the*

The Irish stereotype described the Irish as cannibalistic. It was said that they were eating or being eaten by their own children, and that the Irish consumed the blood of their enemies and friends,¹⁸ "...a most horrible spectacle of three children...all eating and gnawing with their teeth on the entrails of their dead mother..."¹⁹

English perceptions of the Irish not only justified the attacks against them and their colonisation by a 'civilised' country (England), but also supported the need for strict laws and the violent means used to enforce them.²⁰ The use of belittling stereotypes fits part of the typical pattern and sequence of events necessary for the maintenance of colonial rule.

A more contemporary account of the Irish in the eyes of the English is given in Edward Wakefield's²¹ *An Account of Ireland, Statistical and Political* (1812).

...these mountaineers speak the Irish language, are all Roman Catholics, and never employ themselves in weaving, or emigrate from the country....They bleed their cattle frequently in the summer, and preserve the coagulated blood in cakes, for food in the winter; for, as they follow no trades by which they can earn money, they are too poor to purchase oatmeal.²²

Life and Actions of Henry VIII (1552)), quoted in Constania Maxwell, *Irish History from Contemporary Sources, 1509-1610* (London, 1923), 117, quoted in Howard Mumford Jones, "Origins of the Colonial Idea in England", *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 85, no. 5 (September 1942), 452.

¹⁸ Edmund Spenser (1552-1599), *View of the Present State of Ireland*, ed. W. L. Renwick (London: 1934), 81, quoted in Howard Mumford Jones, "Origins of the Colonial Idea in England", 453.

¹⁹ Fynes Moryson's *Itinerary* (1617), quoted in Jones, 453.

²⁰ Robert Mahony, "The Irish Colonial Experience and Swift's Rhetorics of Perception in the 1720s", *Eighteenth-Century Life* 22, no.1 (February 1998), 64.

²¹ Edward Wakefield was an Englishman who spent a lot of time in Ireland. He was born in 1774.

²² Edward Wakefield, *An Account of Ireland, Statistical and Political*, Volume 1 (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, Paternoster-Row, 1812), 735-6.

Although Wakefield does acknowledge the limitation of the peasantry that affected the traits of the Irish, the quote demonstrates the duration of previous stereotyped images of the Irish and the elite's disdain for the peasantry class.²³ Irish laziness, their immorality and even their savagery through the preparation of cow's blood as a meal by itself²⁴ (reminiscent of the previous description of the cannibalistic habits of the Irish) still haunt the perception of the Irish.

Creating a Distance by Adapting English Opinion in Music Collections

Descriptions of Irish peasantry music, in song collections of the first half of the nineteenth century, draw on similar vocabularies and wordings as the stereotype of the people (i.e. barbarised, rude and coarse).

The Irish speaking people have songs by the thousand, but they (especially the political ones) are too despairing; the poor, who are limited, (and in some sort barbarised) to English alone, have only the coarsest ballads, wherein an occasional thought of frolic, or wrath, or misery, is utterly unable to redeem the mass of threadbare jests, ribaldry, mock sentiment from the heathen mythology, low thoughts, and barbarous misuse of the metres and rhymes of the language.²⁵

Buy a ballad in any street in Ireland, from the metropolis to the village, and you will find in it, perhaps, some humour, some tenderness, and some sweetness of sound; but you will certainly find bombast, or slander, or coarseness, united in all cases with

²³ This stereotype was not only applied to the Irish peasantry, but the English peasantry as well.

²⁴ Wakefield, 731.

²⁵ Thomas Davis "Essay on Irish Songs" in Michael J. Barry, *The Songs of Ireland* (Dublin: James Duffy, 1845. 3rd edition: James Duffy, 1847), 32.

false rhythm, false rhyme, conceited imagery, black paper, and blotted printing...the present race demean and mislead the People as much as they stimulate them...²⁶

And these rude ballads, with nearly all the faults of their class, have also a natural, unpremeditated beauty essentially their own.²⁷

In these cases, the degrading opinion is expressed about the lower-class Gaelic-speaking Irish. While the compiler re-voices and confirms English's conceptions of the Irish, the blame for these characteristics is gracefully placed on a certain group while still salvaging and stressing the positive elements of Irish musical culture (as in the last two examples).

Pointing to the Positives: Breaking Free of English Confines and Endearing England to Ireland

In the introduction to many song collections, it is clearly stated that its purpose is to enlighten the English to the remarkable qualities and comparable value of Ireland. Edward Hayes states his objective in the publication of *The Ballads of Ireland* (1855).

Moore's melodies²⁸ are said to have assisted powerfully in achieving Catholic Emancipation, by creating a sympathy for the wrongs of Ireland wherever they penetrated. Let us hope that our labors may have an effect in a similar direction—that they may create a more charitable feeling towards Ireland by inducing the English public to study the history of a country which they have hitherto strangely and unaccountably neglected. If we have added a new charm to Ireland's beautiful scenery—if we have excited curiosity regarding her legends, and her traditions—if we have excited the sympathy for her sufferings, or charity for her shortcomings—if we have paved the way to kindlier feeling between the people of both countries, or

²⁶ Barry, 36-7.

²⁷ Charles Gavan Duffy, *Ballad Poetry of Ireland* (Dublin: James Duffy, 1845), xxxiv.

²⁸ Thomas Moore (1779-1852) published a series called *Irish Melodies* starting in 1808. He had the reputation of being 'the' national poet (equal to the status of Robert Burns in Scotland). (See **Appendix 2** for citation information)

dispelled from the English mind a single prejudice against Ireland—if we have effected any of these objects, our labors have not been all in vain.²⁹

The above quote demonstrates the methodology behind this facet of the elite's agenda. The first task was to soften the image the English had of the Irish. This was done by appealing to the English to recognise the struggles of the Irish with sympathy in order to dispel prejudices or promote empathy for the Irish. One technique to gain England's approval was to "charm" them with beautiful landscapes and the richness of Ireland's legends and other traditions (like music).

Several nineteenth-century elites and scholars have complemented Thomas Moore's Irish song collection *Irish Melodies* (1808) for its political merits.

Moore, however, by his songs, conferred one inestimable service on Ireland, by breaking through the barrier of prejudice and distrust which had divided the two nations³⁰

Moore's *Irish Melodies* consisted of songs that romanticised the image of Ireland and used classical harmonies in its piano accompaniment, which were completely alien to the traditions of the Irish peasantry. Viewed in light of the goal to gain positive English opinions to the quaintness and value of Irish music, the collection was quite successful (even if it seemed more English than Irish).³¹

²⁹ Edward Hayes, *The Ballads of Ireland*, Vol. 1, fourth Edition (Boston: Patrick Donahoe, 1859), 10.

³⁰ Martin MacDermott, *The New Spirit of the Nation or Ballads Songs by the Writer of "The Nation."* (Dublin: Sealy, Byers & Walker, 1894), viii.

³¹ In the nineteenth century, scholars like Edward Hayes and Thomas Davis saw the works of Thomas Moore as, at best, Irish in sentiment but completely English in construction.

Part of the strategy was to insist on the value of Ireland and its equality to England. The following quotes, the first from Hayes' *The Ballads of Ireland* and then Sparling's *Irish Minstrelsy*, articulate this point.

We trust that the Press will favor upon this Irish minstrelsy which adds new graces to the English tongue, as Irish blood grows new laurels to the brow of England and swells the tide of British glory.³²

There is no revealing difference between the Irish and English peoples that need prevent them from meeting and mingling as close friends, from uniting as one folk...The difference is one of manner rather than of matter...³³

These examples are representative of the non-threatening tone taken by most collectors or compilers of the first half of the nineteenth century.³⁴ These collections' primary audience were fellow members of the Irish elite and those from the higher levels of English society.

Representing the Peasantry and Redefining Irish Identity

Why the elite needed to represent the Irish

The national elite perceived that "the people" of Ireland were really what they were stereotyped to be—ignorant, barbarous and in need of guidance from others. Although the elite saw the positive elements in Irish music and culture, these elements were not credited to the peasantry. Scholars like Edward Bunting contend that the peasantry only acted as the storehouse of songs that really originated from the old Celtic race of pre-colonial times. To

³² Hayes, 35.

³³ H. Halliday Sparling, *Irish Minstrelsy* (London: Walter Scott, Ltd., 1887), xxiv.

³⁴ These examples are representative although they appear in the collections of the second half of the century.

add to their argument, the elites contended that if this music was left in the peasantry's hands, the songs would be corrupted and made coarse and rude.

The songs of the people ran habitually into rant and extravagance; and this fault is not confined to the ignorant—it amounts to a national vice...the radical fault of our poetry and oratory is an excess of "purple words".³⁵

Charles Gavan Duffy, the compiler of *Ballad Poetry of Ireland* (1845), remarked that "The COMMON BALLADS of the people were still less suitable"³⁶ to represent the Irish identity to others and even amongst the Irish population. The average Irishman was not given credit for having ideas that may have differed from those of the national elite.

Secondly, the elite had a position of power that involved control of most printed media in Ireland giving them the power to start new movements and circulate revolutionary ideas. Propaganda was released for the people to simply trust and follow. In many ways the elite was the only group in Ireland that could successfully represent the Irish people. While holding less power than their English counterparts, some of the elite not only held positions of relative power and influence,³⁷ but they were also quite aware of the type of manipulation that would be needed to satisfy both the peasantry and the English.

Moore,³⁸ Banim,³⁹ Griffin,⁴⁰ Waller⁴¹ wrote in close contact and sympathy with the peasantry; and their songs are "Irish right through"—as it is said in Ireland, "you can *feel the accent* in them".⁴²

³⁵ Duffy, xxxv.

³⁶ Charles Gavan Duffy, *The Spirit of the Nation or Ballad Songs by the Writers of "The Nation"*, introduction and preface by W. H. Grattan Flood, new Edition (Dublin: James Duffy and Co., Ltd., 1911), 13.

³⁷ People, like Robert Emmet, were able to acquire the support of such powerful figures as Napoleon.

³⁸ Thomas Moore (1779-1852) (See the above note or **Appendix 2**)

Those mentioned above (Moore, Banim, Griffin, and Waller) were members of the social elite but their contact with the aspirations and feelings of the peasantry was quite limited, especially since two of them took up permanent residence in England and Moore travelled extensively. Duffy felt that the only songs that were "more Irish than the Irish themselves" should represent Irish identity.⁴³ This statement indicates a clear desire for the construction of a new identity.⁴⁴

Constructing a New Irish Identity

There were two basic elements that needed to be in the new Irish identity. One was to give credibility to the Irish in the eyes of the English and the other was to include (rather than isolate) the Irish peasantry. To satisfy both groups, the national elite needed to package

³⁹ John Banim (1798-1842): was born in county Kilkenny but later moved to London, Banim a student of St. John's College (Kilkenny) he was a prolific writer of novels and stories. (See **Appendix 2** for citation information)

⁴⁰ Gerald Griffin (1803-1840): was born in county Limerick and lived in London in 1823. Griffin was also a popular author of stories and novels (his major work is the novel *The Collegians* 1829). (See **Appendix 2** for citation information)

⁴¹ John Francis Waller (1809-1894): was born in county Limerick, he published volumes of poems and served as an editor of *Dublin University Magazine*. (See **Appendix 2** for citation information)

⁴² Sparling, xxiii.

⁴³ Duffy, *Ballad Poetry of Ireland*, xxix.

⁴⁴ For more information on this topic, refer to: Hobsbawn, Eric and Terence Ranger eds. *The Invention of Tradition*. Cambridge: University Press, 1983. (Reprint: New York: Canto Edition, 1992).

the image of "the Irish" in an attractive wrapping⁴⁵ that could touch the "hearts of the people"⁴⁶ and still lived up to a standard that would please the English. It was decided that an acceptable foundation for an Irish identity was based in antiquity. The national elite consciously evoked Irish society from the pre-colonial days when the English respected and enjoyed Irish aristocratic culture and its people, while still evoking the familiar⁴⁷ in the eyes of the Irish peasantry.⁴⁸

In order to raise the elite's status, they needed to gain acceptance of a new Irish identity. This re-construction or invention of the Irish identity became more and more overt as the century progressed. With the presence of the Society for the Preservation and Publication of the Melodies of Ireland (1851) there were clear standards that filtered out any aspect of the music that was not in accordance with an image that the elite wished to project. By the end of the nineteenth century (and beginning of the twentieth century) the agenda to create a new identity for Ireland is stated clearly in the new edition (1911) of *The Spirit of the Nation* with a foreword by W. H. Grattan Flood. "The NATION poets inspired, almost recreated, Ireland..."⁴⁹ The quote obviously falls out of the confines I have set for this

⁴⁵ Joseph J. Ryan, "Nationalism and Irish Music" in *Irish Music Studies: 3 Music and Irish Cultural History*, edited by Gerard Gillen and Harry White (Dublin: Betaprint, 1995), 108.

⁴⁶ Alfred Graves, *The Irish Song Book* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1894), tenth Impression (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1897), vii.

⁴⁷ The peasantry would be familiar with tales of the past and be familiar of the noble days of the Irish.

⁴⁸ The peasantry already identified/were familiar with this culture through their oral traditions of stories and legends.

⁴⁹ The Nation poets include: Thomas Davis (1814-45), Charles Gavan Duffy (1816-1903), James Clarence Mangan (1803-1849), Denis Florence McCarthy (1817-1882) (See Appendix 2 for information) Charles Gavan Duffy, *The Spirit of the Nation or Ballad Songs by*

chapter but it is useful to see that the nineteenth century was evolving to this point. Many of the ballads included in this song collection were from the earlier editions of *The Nation* (in the 1840s) and some poems certainly date before this as well.

Gaining the Support of the Irish Population

It was to the utmost importance to gain the trust and support of the Irish population. The use of select elements of Irish culture allowed the elite not only to control what was fed into the media at large but it also made the Irish peasantry feel included and recognised. It is evident from the song collections of the nineteenth century that the social elite was acutely aware of how to manipulate the Irish population.

To reach the heart of his nation he must borrow the tones that naturally and habitually speak its feelings.

"Thy voice I'll steal to woo thyself,
That voice that none can match."⁵⁰

Gerard Delanty makes the following statement in his article "Social Exclusion and the New Nationalism: European Trends and their Implications for Ireland" "[n]ationalism's legitimacy rests in its ability to articulate the grievances and common-sense attitudes of everyday life on the political level."⁵¹

The elite's agenda was to join in the nationalist movement taking place across the world in the nineteenth century. It was realised that in order to project a united image to the

the Writers of "The Nation", introduction and preface by W. H. Grattan Flood, New Edition (Dublin: James Duffy and Co., Ltd., 1911), viii.

⁵⁰ Duffy, *The Ballad Poetry of Ireland*, xxvii.

⁵¹ Gerard Delanty, "Social Exclusion and the New Nationalism: European Trends and their Implications for Ireland" in *Academic Search Full Text Elite Database* (From *Innovation: The European Journal of Social Science*, (10), no. 1, June 1997, 127-141.) [Cited 8 November 1999]

rest of the world, the people had to, at the very least, appear to be united. The unity of the people needed to be based on the customs of the majority, which were the peasantry.

This is a fit peace-offering on the altar of conciliation and it is most cheering to see Irishmen of all sects and parties uniting to make it. Let us trust that they will unite for more than this, and learn that the service of their common country, in all things is as reconcileable with their individual differences of opinion, as the honor paid her thus.⁵²

This statement, made by Michael J. Barry in his 1847 collection, reflects the mentality of the social elite of the first half of the nineteenth century.

Anti-English Sentiment

The agenda of the Irish elite developed, in part, out of the resentment that developed towards the complete legal domination of Ireland by the English. Barry's collection, *The Songs of Ireland* (1847), includes an essay submitted by Thomas Davis (1814-45). The essay is full of hostility towards the English and even goes to the extreme of degrading and insisting that "England's songs are the worst in the world."⁵³ and "humour the English have not, so they naturally borrow the gay songs of Ireland and Scotland...English robbery of Irish literature is quite as marked as of Irish wealth."⁵⁴ It was not the peasantry population, the truly oppressed, that had the most opposition to English rule, but the isolated Protestant Ascendancy of Ireland.

⁵² Barry, xix.

⁵³ Ibid., 26.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 27.

Purpose—Nationalism

By the last part of the nineteenth century, Ireland reached full-fledged nationalism. As the nineteenth century progressed, the Irish social elite's agenda developed and changed to separatism which strengthened conflict between Protestants and Catholics throughout all the classes. In the following quote from an updated version of *The Nation* songbook, it is clear that music continued to have a crucial role in the nationalist agenda.

It must be remembered that in the national creed of Young Ireland, poetry was only a means; --the end and purpose of every ballad and song being, to rouse the nation into enthusiasm for Ireland as a Nation, and for the cause of national freedom. There is scarcely a verse in this collection through which this purpose does not shine; and therefore in claiming for Young Ireland a large share of poetical inspiration than any other political movement has called forth.⁵⁵

Many Irish authors and commentators of the nineteenth century (members of the nationalist elite) incorporated their political perceptions into their writings. The elite's agenda was used as tool to filter out any undesirable characteristics of Irish society while exaggerating positive qualities in the media. The objective was to create a respected image of the Irish and to gain peasantry support in their political cause to acquire sovereign power over Ireland.

The majority of Irish literature produced in the first half of the nineteenth century was directed at an English audience, whether the author was a native to Ireland (i.e. William Carleton) or he was an Anglo-Irishman with a particular interest in the perception of the country (i.e. Thomas Crofton Croker). For example Croker wrote with the intention of educating the English on Irish culture to produce a change in their attitudes.

⁵⁵ Martin MacDermott, ix.

The fact is, justice can only be rendered to Ireland, by Englishmen of all classes making themselves better acquainted with her people, and acquiring even so slight a glimmering of knowledge, as to be able to perceive that the Irish, with certain superstitions—ideas, if the reader pleases—have feelings much like those of other persons of other countries, with hearts much readier to forgive and to forget wrongs by which humanity has been outraged.⁵⁶

The writing produced had to fit set literary standards dictated by the contemporary notions of proper form and style.⁵⁷ The only way that tales of the Irish could gain credibility and respect was through consistent repetition of 'facts' and the elimination of anything that could be construed as irrational or absurd.⁵⁸ The writers of history were very aware that they had an audience, and most antiquarians edited the material they found to appeal to the cultivated reader.⁵⁹



The presence of a political agenda and the politics of the first half of the nineteenth century are outlined here to make the reader aware of the issues entwined with literature produced in this era and to lay out some of the political context. The next chapter takes the

⁵⁶ *The Keen of the South of Ireland as Illustrative of Irish Political and Domestic History, Manners, Music and Superstitions* (London: Percy Society, 1844), xlv, quoted in Neil C. Hultin, "Mrs. Harrington, Mrs. Leary, Mr. Croker, and the 'Irish Howl'", *Eire Ireland* 20, no. 4 (winter 1985), 63.

⁵⁷ Neil C. Hultin, "Anglo-Irish Folklore from Clonmel: T.C. Croker and British Library Add. 20099", *Journal of Folklore Studies* 27, no. 3-4 (1986), 300.

⁵⁸ Neil C. Hultin, "Belief and Interpretation in T. Crofton Croker's Legends of the Lakes", *Folklore* 98, no. 1 (1987), 67, 66.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 66.

information presented in this chapter and applies it to the Irish harper as the precursor of the nineteenth century travelling musician



CHAPTER TWO

THE HARPER AS NATIONAL SYMBOL AND PRECURSOR TO THE IRISH TRAVELLING MUSICIAN

An understanding of the pre-nineteenth-century harper is essential to comprehend the travelling musician. While the number of itinerant harpers started to decline in the last half of the eighteenth century, the harper, as a figure, was given a new life in nineteenth-century literature concerned with the Irish elite's political agenda. This chapter briefly examines the harper as a national and idealised symbol, providing the necessary background to understand the practices of the travelling musician (the piper specifically). The influence of this literature will be seen in the documentation covered in **Chapter Three**.

Who are the Irish Harpers and Why Should We Care?

Since the days of Ireland's aristocratic social structure (second century), the harper has been a recognised and respected figure. The harper's patronage came exclusively from the nobility throughout the span of this profession (into the early nineteenth century). Noble families patronised harpers to supply musical accompaniment for the recitation of a bard¹ who was also under the family's patronage. Up until the sixteenth century, there was little *need* for harpers to travel great distances.² Furthermore those that played this instrument did not necessarily do so for subsistence but rather for pleasure.

¹ Bards are one of the Celtic order of poets or one who composed and recited epic or heroic poems. They often accompanied themselves on the harp.

² Harpers were permitted to travel using the resources (horse and money) of their primary patron to provide music to other families of distinction.

In the days of the chieftain overlordship and caste organisation (the second to about the fifteenth century), the harper had a very well defined place. He had a very high status, and according to Artelia Court, they (priest, poets and harpers) were considered "men of special gifts"³ that travelled. The harper was part of an educated class that was closely connected to priests and the aristocracy.⁴ Along with the travelling bards and priests, the harpers made up the only "centralised political system" that could be called a "national institution."⁵

After Henry VIII was proclaimed king in 1541, the harpers' practices changed to involve the need to travel for sufficient patronage. The change became necessary due to the implementation of colonial rule and the introduction of a landlord system. Land was taken from their Catholic owners and reassigned to landlords who were mostly English and some Scottish Protestant. This process of land confiscation occurred over a period of approximately two centuries. Although the process was gradual and left little effect on the most rural regions of Ireland, harpers were no longer sedentary to one chiefdom (which could constitute a county) but acquired patronage from different landowners⁶ who had distinct tracts of land within the same territory. Patronage was also affected by a major emigration of the many Chiefdom families in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.⁷

³ Myles Dillon, *Early Irish Studies* (Reprint: Dublin, 1959), quoted in Artelia Court, *Puck of Droms: Lives and Literature of the Irish Tinkers* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1985), 10.

⁴ Court, 11.

⁵ Ibid., 10.

⁶ The houses of these patrons were called "Big Houses".

⁷ Padraic Colum, *A Treasury of Irish Folklore*, edited by Padraic Colum, 2nd revised edition (New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1967), 389.

When Irish land began to be confiscated and reassigned to mostly Protestant landlords, these gentry and yeomen⁸ were as eager to patronise the harpers as their original patrons, the Gaelic noble families. Clearly there was an established respectability for this profession. The connection of harpers to the nobility and even as being part of a noble race was certainly to the advantage of the nineteenth century Irish elite.

Knowing about how harpers were thought of and described will help expose an otherwise concealed standard employed by those who write about the travelling musician in the nineteenth century. The harper and his⁹ instrument were used as symbols, playing an important part in the elite's agenda. The harper was used to evoke pride in the Irish people. While contemporary writers anchored their writings in the legendary past (with tales of the harper from pre-colonial days),¹⁰ this elite tried to establish a direct relevance to the present. The purpose of drawing from the pre-colonial harper was to skip the indignity and defeats the Irish suffered between these two historical points.

Writings tracing the long history of this profession were part of the elite's attempts to reach for something that could pass as authentically Irish and still be respectable. The tradition of the harper existed before the English invasions and the eventual colonisation of Ireland. By going back to this point in history, the national elite was strongly confronting

⁸ A yeoman is a person in a class of freeholders (involved in a system of tenure for which an estate is held in fee for life or an estate inherited or held for life) who were below the gentry in status.

⁹ Although the majority of Harpers were male, there was a female minority present.

¹⁰ One example is the Legend of Dagda's Harp. Dagda was the chief and high priest of the golden-haired people of Ireland who battled against the Fomorians (the dark-haired and eyed people). His harp was heavily adorned with beautiful gems and had magical powers. Dagda could strike down an army of men with a single chord or heal the wounded. The harp could also lull his enemies to sleep and even responded to the calls of Dagda to help him. (<http://www.ireland-now.com/heritage/myths/dagdasharp.html>)

the English colonial attitude that the Irish were uncivilised, uncultured and an ignorant people that needed to be ruled over.¹¹

The Harper Makes his Appearance in Literature

Written accounts of the lives of harpers only began to appear in the last part of the eighteenth century.¹² Edward Bunting (1773-1843), who wrote at the turn of the nineteenth century, was the first active scholar to focus on the harp player and his music. Bunting's major works in this area are his collections *A General Collection of the Ancient Music of Ireland* (1809) and *The Ancient Music of Ireland* (1840). The collections include introductory essays with details on the harper and his instrument.

Edward Bunting was the first of the three main collectors of Irish music in nineteenth century (George Petrie and P.W. Joyce¹³ were the others). He published three collections¹⁴ that were based mostly on the dying repertoire of the harper but these collections also included melodies to songs.

Bunting came from an advantaged background that allowed him access to many resources. Bunting was quite educated and his abilities in music were as an organist and transcriber of music by ear. As outlined in Helen Sewell Johnson's dissertation *The History of Anglo-Irish Ballad Tradition* (1973), Bunting was well acquainted with many of the leaders of political movements in the nineteenth century (such as Wolfe Tone, Robert Emmet, and

¹¹ Joel Berlatsky, "Roots of Conflict in Ireland: Colonial Attitudes in the Ages of the Penal Laws", *Éire-Ireland* 18, no. 4 (1983), 43.

¹² Written accounts did exist before the eighteenth century but those that did were fragmented.

¹³ George Petrie (1773-1866) and Patrick Weston Joyce (1827-1914) See **Appendix**

Henry Joy McCracken).¹⁵ One account of the last harp festival in Belfast 1792, states that its real purpose was to draw attention away from a meeting that the United Irishmen (United Irishmen)¹⁶ were having at the same time.¹⁷

Especially when examining Bunting, one does not have to look far to see that he had his own agenda and prejudices that were translated into his writings and his selection of performers to transcribe. Bunting's prefaces to his collections outline his feelings extensively. As a documentor of Irish music, Bunting was not interested in the music of the day instead he sought to find the music of an ancient and noble bardic heritage.¹⁸ Bunting's focus was on the harper, who he felt were the last of a dying race of Old Celts with noble heritage. Bunting calls the harper "the last representatives of a class so famous in song and history".¹⁹ Harpers were elevated to a noble class, in Bunting's mind while the peasantry produced nothing worth noting. Like other antiquarians, Bunting sought to collect data in its most "correct" form for preservation and to fulfil the desire of a particular audience.

The *Memoirs* of harper Arthur O'Neill (1734-1816)²⁰ is another source of great importance in the documentation of harpers and their lives. Written at the turn of the

¹⁴ The third is *General Collection of the Ancient Irish Music* (1840).

¹⁵ Helen Sewell Johnson, *The History of Anglo-Irish Ballad Tradition* (Ann Arbor: University of Pennsylvania, PhD Dissertation in Folklore, 1973), 86. See **Appendix 2**.

¹⁶ See **Appendix 2** for information.

¹⁷ Johnson, 87.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 123.

¹⁹ Charlotte Milligan Fox, *Annals of the Irish Harpers* (London: Smith & Co., 1911), 106. (Taken from Bunting, *The Ancient Music of Ireland* (Dublin: Hodges and Smith, 1840))

²⁰ An important harper of the eighteenth century. He was considered to be the last of this dying breed.

century (c. 1803) it is a resource without parallel because these are the words of an actual musician who lived this life and also describes it.

Part of the sudden concern to preserve information on the lives and music of Irish harpers came from the threat of their extinction. But the other significant reason that the documentation of harpers became so prominent²¹ in nineteenth-century writings is because they suited the national elite's political agenda.

The Prevailing Image of the Harper

Since the writings about the harper and the travelling musician²² were both being produced at the same time, it stands to reason that the descriptions of travelling instrumentalists²³ especially, would be recited in similar terms. Not only are the travelling musicians and the harper compared for similarities, the harper is also used as a kind of measuring stick to evaluate the traditions and practices of the travelling musician.

Information on the past traditions of the harpers was stored in the oral traditions of the Irish population. Whether or not this information accurately reflected the practices and traditions of the harpers will not be examined here. What will be addressed and outlined is

²¹ In the nineteenth century only a small number of travelling harpers existed but the harper was, in a way, given a new life through the written media. Not only were they brought alive by the harper's documentors, but also they were given a different life according to an agenda.

²² The term 'travelling musician' will not include the harper. It will be used as a broad term to include all types of musicians that travel in the first half of the nineteenth century. These musicians include pipers, fiddlers and ballad singers.

²³ The term 'travelling instrumentalist' refers to only those travelling musicians that play instruments (pipe or fiddle).

what was portrayed in written literature.²⁴ Although this information is contradictory at times, it still gives the reader an idea of the types of messages being conveyed through the description of the harper.

The following is an example of a typical description of the harper that emphasises their link with the past and their importance within Irish society.

Our readers know the immense influence the ancient Irish harpers or bards wielded. They were the counselors of their princes, and no expedition or feat of war was undertaken without consulting them...²⁵

Captain Francis O'Neill²⁶ (184(8)9- 1936) makes some elemental assumptions²⁷ about the readers of his *Irish Minstrels and Musicians* (written in 1913). His conjectures include that the readers are of Irish descent and because of their background they have been exposed to the history of traditions of Ireland's past.

The harper's relationship with the nobility in an aristocratic system of power is given special emphasis by almost all that describe them. Many descriptions involve the heightened status of these musicians. Not only did the harper exclusively associate with persons of rank

²⁴ Written literature is the domain of the educated (for the most part, those in the national elite) but oral transmission, among the peasantry, may reveal a completely different view of the harpers. This is an important distinction but not one that I can not address adequately here.

²⁵ Captain Francis O'Neill, *Irish Minstrels and Musicians*, (Darby: Norwood Editions, 1973), 23.

²⁶ Captain (later) Chief (Daniel) Francis O'Neill (1848-9—1936) was born in west Cork county to a well off educated father and grew up in a largely Irish speaking rural community. His house was open for visiting travelling musicians. In addition to his family being good singers and the parish had two professional pipers, he took up the Irish flute. He settled in Chicago in 1871 where he collected Irish tunes and actively preserved Irish music in his two major works *Irish Folk Music* and *Irish Minstrels and Musicians*. (www.chiefoneill.com [cited October, 2000])

²⁷ O'Neill does not quote a source on this information so for the sake of convenience I give the credit to O'Neill.

and wealth,²⁹ he was considered to be of equal social status to his patrons.²⁹ An example of this can be found in the descriptions of Turlough O'Carolan (1670-1738), who is perhaps the most famous and respected harper of the eighteenth century.

Wherever he went the gates of the nobility and others [their doors] were thrown open to him, he was received with respect and a distinguished place assigned him at the table. In all respects he was a genuine representative of the bards of old.³⁰

Other accounts of harpers conveyed a comparable image involving their high status and even power. The procuring of patronage continued as these itinerants set out to make their living. Captain F. O'Neill recounts that in the old days, the harper could visit any prince or chief and was sure to be treated with respect and hospitality.³¹

The establishment of a noble blood connection also played a role in elevating the status of the harper. There is an account of Arthur O'Neill attending a dinner among Munster chieftains. According to one source, Lord Kenmare (one of the chieftains) said to O'Neill "...you should be at the head of the table, as your ancestors were the original Milesians³² of this kingdom".³³

²⁹ O'Neill, 108.

²⁹ Donal O'Sullivan, *Carolan: The Life and Times and Music of an Irish Harper*, volume 1 (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Limited., 1958), 32.

³⁰ O'Neill, 71-72.

³¹ Ibid., 23.

³² The genuine Irish Celtic people were descended from Milesius of Spain, who was said to have invaded and possessed Ireland a thousand years before Christ. (See *Glossary*).

³³ O'Neill, 86.

The harpers, along with the (poetic) bards,³⁴ had considerable influence in Irish society. According to O'Neill, as soon as the English realised the power that these travelling musicians held, they offered rewards for the slaying of any Irish harper,³⁵ whether this is true or not I can not say, but it was part of the literature. The statement conveys that the harpers, even as symbols, threatening established English rule and authority. No doubt there was a political motivation for the circulation of this statement. It put the native Irish harper in a position of power that intimidated the English. It is possible that this tale was constructed with this specific goal in mind.

Descriptions of the physical appearance of the Harper, mostly through their clothing, focused mainly on those that depicted an obvious surplus and considerable patronage. What follows is a description from Bunting's *The Ancient Music of Ireland* (1840). I will include the full quote here that includes a few other notions of the harper.

It is interesting for the reader to know something of the personal appearance of these last representatives of a class so famous in song and history. They were in general clad in a comfortable homely manner in drab-coloured or grey cloth of coarse manufacture. A few of them made an attempt at splendour by wearing silver buttons on their coats, particularly Higgins and O'Neill. The former had his buttons decorate with his initials only; but O'Neill had his initials, surmounted by the crest of the O'Neills, engraved on silver buttons the size of a half-crown. Some had horses and guides when travelling about the country, others their attendants only who carried their harps. They seemed perfectly happy and contented with their lot, and all appeared convinced of the excellence of the genuine old Irish music, which they said had existed for centuries...³⁶

³⁴ For more information on this tradition see: Daniel Corkery, *The Hidden Ireland* (Dublin: Gill and MacMillan Ltd., 1924; Reprint, Dublin: Gill and MacMillan, 1967).

³⁵ This seems to be a part of the image that the elite wished to portray in the press. My research has not revealed any incident that would support this statement as an actual practice of the time. (O'Neill, 23.)

³⁶ Bunting quoted in Fox, 106.

Here is an account of harpers Jerome Duigenan and Oliver Size described by Arthur O'Neill in his *Memoirs*. "...Duigenan was in the full cauthic,³⁷ dress, and wore a cap of the same stuff, shaped like a sugar loaf, with many tassels."³⁸ Size was "... dressed very gaudy, wearing scarlet, and gold and silver lace."³⁹ Arthur O'Neill also includes the following comment that suggests that not all harpers were decked out in the most expensive clothing.

Harper Hugh Higgins "supported the character of a gentleman-harper, was uncommon genteel in his manners, and spared no expense in his dress. He travelled in such a manner as does and will do credit to an Irish harper."⁴⁰

Real versus the Idealised Harper

For the most part, the information provided in nineteenth-century contemporary writings was geared towards an idealised image of the harper. Accounts have surfaced, however, that contradict the popularised image of the harper in the general media. The following are two examples that paint the harper in a different light, the last is made by Arthur O'Neill.

If a traveller was benighted or held up by snow or inclement weather—as Carolan was upon occasion—his condition might well be unenviable; for his only refuge might be a chimneyless cabin or public house that was little more than a dram-shop.⁴¹

Hannen, my guide, was crying with the wet and cold he suffered in that journey; but my pride in not availing myself of shelter was sufficiently punished, for I was shortly

³⁷ A material of woven pith of rushes, the cap was a high conical hat, which was in accordance with the folk customs of the day dating back several centuries.

³⁸ Arthur O'Neill, *Memoirs of Arthur O'Neill* quoted in Fox, 167.

³⁹ Ibid., 144.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 156.

⁴¹ O'Sullivan, 15.

afterwards afflicted by such a severe rheumatism that I lost the power of two of my left-hand fingers...⁴²

These accounts directly oppose those given above. The fact that O'Neill, a harper, reveals that he suffered from exposure to the elements strengthens the argument that conditions for the minstrels in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century were not as rosy as the contemporary writers would have their audience believe.

It may here be noted by reference to the "Life of the Blind Harper, Arthur O'Neill," that this description of the minstrels sheltering in huts is inaccurate. The harp was, as [Arthur] O'Neill himself calls it, a passport, which won entrance not only to the homes of the remaining old families of Irish race, but many of the newly-planted lords of land became enthusiastic patrons of music...⁴³

Arthur O'Neill's statements are completely negated without an explanation as to why O'Neill would make such a claim.



Although the harper is not described in detail, sufficient information is given about this profession to proceed to the next chapter. Using the harper as the standard and being aware of the political motivation for shaping all literature produced in the nineteenth century, descriptions of the travelling musician can not escape a certain degree of construction.



⁴² O'Neill quoted in Fox, 193.

⁴³ Fox, 32.

CHAPTER THREE

THE PRACTICES OF THE TRAVELLING MUSICIAN

The purpose of this chapter is to outline the types of travelling musicians in the first half of the nineteenth century and to review their practices according to my sources. The chapter is subdivided into several sections according to the kind of musician and the different types of practices.

Table 3.1
Travelling Musicians of the Nineteenth Century

Travelling Instrumentalists	Piper
	Fiddle Player
Travelling Dancer	Dancing Master (some were able to play instruments)
Travelling Singers	Ballad Singer
	Keener
	Hedge Schoolmaster

After the practices of the piper and fiddler are discussed, and the dance master's practices are outlined, an exploration of the ballad singer, keeners and the hedge schoolmaster will follow.

Francis O'Neill, in his *Irish Minstrels and Musicians*, speaks of a trinity of peasant entertainers:¹ the piper, fiddler and dance master. These three types of "musicians" were patronised by the peasantry extensively and catered to their patrons' love of dance music and their desire for recreation. The presence of a romantic gloss in the literature of the nineteenth century is found in most descriptions of the practices of the travelling musician

¹ Captain Francis O'Neill, *Irish Minstrels and Musicians*, Chicago: 1913, (Reprint: Norwood Editions, 1973), 421. (see **Introduction** for information on this source)

(especially those made by William Carleton and Captain Francis O'Neill.)² Both seemed to have idealised conceptions of the travelling musician's way of life, which tend not to take into account the conditions of the time. O'Neill links the union piper³ and the fiddler together with the harpers as cherished institutions⁴ in Ireland. He calls them the "minstrels of the multitude" who mingled with every feature of Irish life from the cabin (the peasantry) to the castle (the gentry and lords).⁵ "Never at a loss for bed or for board; every door was open to them and every purse untied."⁶ With a similar function in society, to entertain and promote "good humour,"⁷ many of the practices of the travelling piper and fiddler were the same. The above statements demonstrate the presence of a desire to portray an idealised image of the travelling instrumentalist. This next section amalgamates information found on both types of instrumentalist to give a comprehensive view of their manner of living.

Travelling instrumentalists, which included the pipe player⁸ and the fiddler, have much in common, and can, at times, be described similarly. Many of these musicians were

² Although O'Neill quotes freely from many different sources, the way he constructs the text portrays the travelling musician in a very specific way.

³ See under "Pipes" in **Glossary**.

⁴ Captain Francis O'Neill, *Irish Folk Music*, Chicago: 1913, (Reprint: Norwood Editions, 1973), 9.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Union (*uilleann*) pipes or the Highland pipes in northern counties like Donegal.

stricken with blindness (usually from smallpox) or another physical ailment and a career in music became one of the only respectable livings available to them.⁹

Instruments

The pipes¹⁰ or the fiddle were basically the only two options of the travelling instrumentalist. The pipes had a long history within Ireland, which at one point ran in direct competition with the harp players of the country (they were the natural successors to the travelling minstrel profession).

Although the Irish flute and tin whistle were widely available, compared to the fiddle and the pipes, there must have been a distinguishing feature in either the player or the instrument itself that made the fiddle and the pipes practically the only choices for the travelling musician. Perhaps the flute was not a viable option because it did not require a great deal of training to achieve a degree of proficiency. Thus the flute most likely fell into an amateur status and was only played by non-professionals in the first part of the nineteenth century. Another aspect to consider is that the *uilleann* pipes and the fiddle were able to keep a continuous sound, whereas the flute player need to take breaths that would interrupt the continuity required for dance music.

⁹ Breandán Breathnach, *Folk Music and Dances of Ireland* (Reprint: Dublin: The Mercier Press, 1971. Dublin: The Mercier Press, 1986), 56.

¹⁰ These pipes include the *uilleann* pipes as well as the Highland pipes (bagpipes) in the counties like Donegal which were in close proximity to Scotland.

Gender

From the days of the wandering harper to travelling instrumentalists, blind males¹¹ almost monopolised the itinerant musical profession.¹² Travelling singers could either be male or female but males still dominated. The gender of the performer may have played a very influential role in the shaping of the musician's practices. Males had more independence from their families and were often expected to make a living outside of their originating community. The need for men to travel great distances in order to find work and patronage was an accepted practice in Ireland.

It is clear that there was a dominance of males not only among itinerant music performers but also among printers and composers of Irish music. Edward Bunting (1773-1843) in *The Ancient Music of Ireland* (1840), indicates the names of the authors (when known) and the players from whom he gathered airs for his collections of music. Falling into the scope of my study almost perfectly, the procurement of the collected songs spanned from 1792-1839. Bunting records one hundred and forty nine airs and their sources, the information breaks down in the following manner.

¹¹ The majority were male.

¹² O'Neill, *Irish Folk Music*, 10.

Table 3.2
The Breakdown of Song Sources in Bunting's *The Ancient Music of Ireland* (1840)¹³

Gender	Singer	Harper	Piper	Unspecified	Subtotal	% of the Total
Male	-	65	4	44	113	77%
Female	-	-	-	12	12	8%
Unspecified	-	-	2	20	22	15%
TOTAL	-	65	6	76	147	100%

The lower percentage of women may be explained by the cultural stigma against women travelling alone. It was considered improper for women to travel the distances required to reach different fairs alone.¹⁴ Although females were certainly musical (as singers) most of them used this talent to share with members of their family, their community, or they enjoyed singing with other women while they worked on the spinning wheel. It is not that females were not permitted to travel but the expectation was that once the woman arrived at the destination she would become established for a period of time engaged in seasonal work or she would live a sedentary lifestyle in the new location.

Hereditary Families of Musicians

Hereditary families of musicians developed for a very logical and practical reason. Since parents or relatives passed down their skills and knowledge to their children, it makes sense that part or most of this training would be done with music when the divulger of this knowledge was a travelling musician. It was not necessary for the transmitter to be a

¹³ Edward Bunting, *The Ancient Music of Ireland* (Dublin: Hodges and Smith, 1840. Reprint; Dublin: Waltons' Piano and Musical Instrument Galleries Ltd., 1969), 23. Bunting's chief assistant, Patrick Lynch, in 1802 noted in a diary who the informants were (singer or not).

¹⁴ Colin Neilands, "Irish Broadside Ballads: Performers and Performances", *Folk Music Journal* (6), no. 2, (1991), 212.

travelling musician but just to have musical knowledge from any source (usually a family member or perhaps he took lessons from a visiting travelling musician).

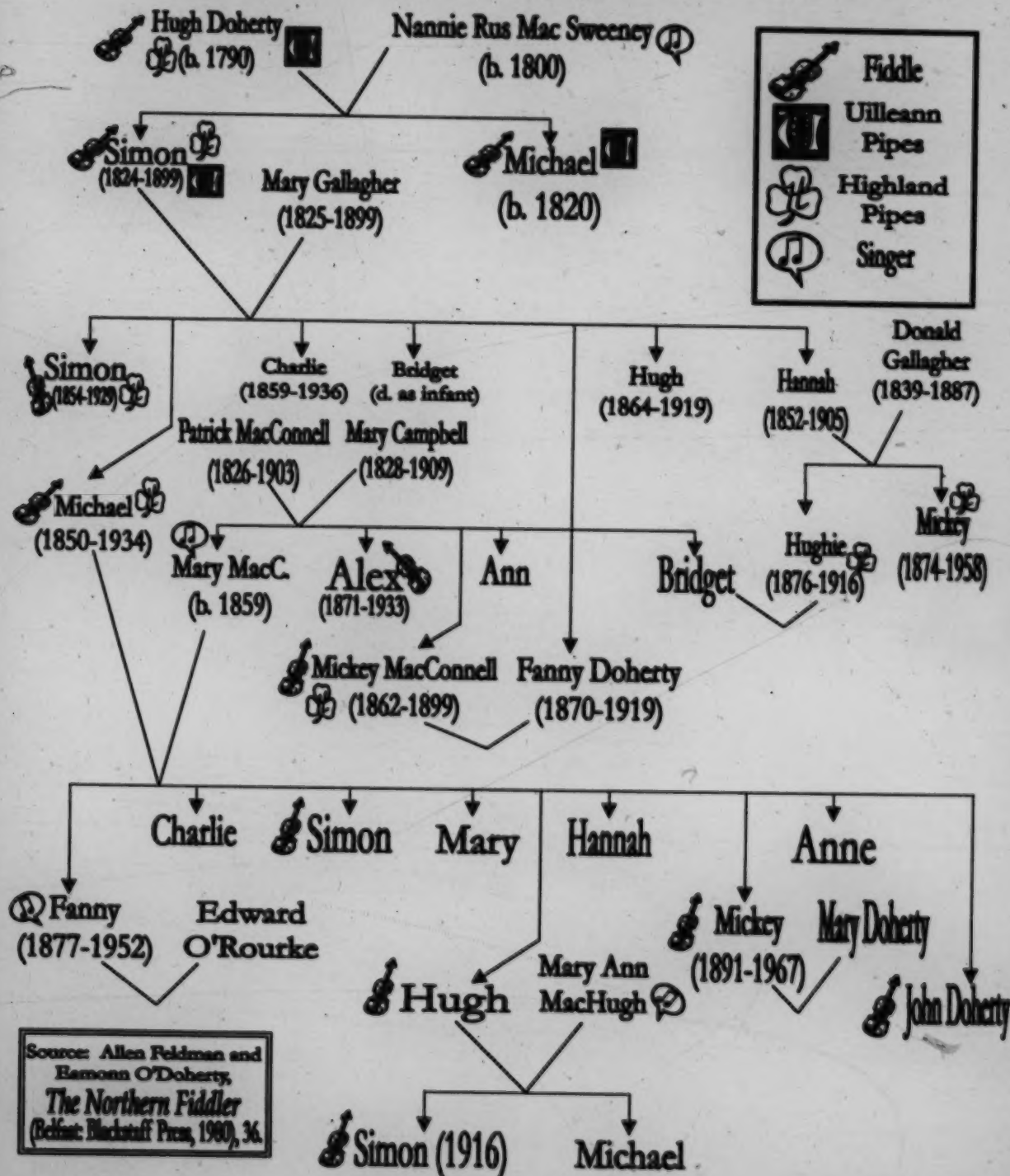
Figure 3.1 (see next page) is a reproduction of a genealogy of three generations of the Doherty family.¹⁵ The genealogy includes the family names of Doherty, MacSweeney, MacConnell and Gallagher who made up the travelling musicians originating from county Donegal.

The diagram shows the instruments played by the known members of each generation. Based on this sampling those who played instruments were all male (usually with the knowledge of more than one instrument) and when the females were musical, it was through singing.

¹⁵ Allen Feldman and Eamonn O'Doherty, *The Northern Fiddler: Music and Musicians of Donegal and Tyrone* (Belfast: Blackstaff Press, 1980), 36.

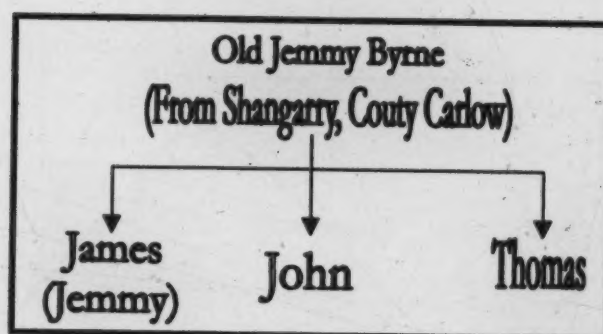
Figure 3.1

THE DOHERTY FAMILY: A MUSICAL GENEALOGY



Two more hereditary families of pipers are mentioned in O'Neill's *Irish Minstrels and Musicians*. The Byrne family had a home base from which they came back to for a set time to enjoy each other's company and live off the money they earned in their travels as musicians.

Figure 3.2
The Byrne Family



From their home in Shangarry these men "radiated to the "patrons", fairs, and races in that and neighboring counties..."¹⁶ The Byrne family, best known in the county of Wexford, were constants at the fair of Scarawalsh that took place August 16 every year. The brothers developed a travel circuit that, as O'Neill says, "like all travelling minstrels he [John Byrne] had his favorite haunts."¹⁷ Brother James emigrated to Ballacorney (county Wexford) where he lived in a community full of piper activity. In addition to the presence of amateur piper, Ben Rigley, the community was also visited by John Cash and Samuel Rowsome who became distinguished pipers themselves.¹⁸ Rowsome became James' student and in turn he transmitted his knowledge to his three sons (thus developing another hereditary family of musicians—the Rowsome hereditary family of musicians). This example

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid., 218.

demonstrates that not all travelling musicians were without a home as their base needing to travel constantly to obtain their means of subsistence. In the early part of the nineteenth century, the music making profession could be profitable and attracted more than just blind men.

Getting the Necessary Skills

If no one was available within the family to teach music, the child would have to be apprenticed to a teacher within the community or in another county. In the above section on hereditary families it has already been mentioned that Samuel Rowsome left Ballintore (in county Wexford) to be apprenticed to James Byrne residing in Ballycarney. O'Neill mentions two other names of pipers that needed to be apprenticed by someone outside their family; Edmund Keating Hyland and Thomas O'Hannigan.¹⁹

Becoming a Travelling Musician

William Carleton's *Tales and Sketches Illustrating the Character of the Irish Peasantry* (1845) provides a somewhat detailed description of the process involved in becoming a musically trained itinerant. Although the family mourns the child's misfortune,²⁰ it is later accepted and a certain sequence of events takes place. At the "proper age"²¹ (which is not specified), the parents procure a fiddle (or pipes) for the child. If the family did not have sufficient funds, they would take up a collection from their friends and neighbours to buy the

¹⁸ Ibid., 220.

¹⁹ Ibid, 202-203.

²⁰ The blindness was usually the result of smallpox and not as a birth defect.

instrument.²² If there was no one in the family that could teach the boy, an apprenticeship was set up with the best local pipe or fiddle player and when the time came, the mother simply delivered the boy to this man's care for his training.²³ While there was no training fee the student was required to give his teacher (or master) all that he earned when playing at dances²⁴ while he was still learning to become proficient on his instrument.²⁵ The child's training would last about three to four years²⁶ and when he reached his later teens, this new musician prepared to set out for his life as a wandering instrumentalist.

The occurrence of certain fairs, *patrons*,²⁷ and markets played an important role in the planning of the musician's travel circuit. After a period in the "field" (so to speak) the musician would become acquainted with the principal families and communities that were willing and able to accept the musician as a guest into their homes.²⁸ There were occasions when a piper received a special invitation from a well-off farmer to be their honoured guest

²¹ William Carleton, *Tales and Sketches Illustrating the Character of the Irish Peasantry* (Dublin: J. Duffy, 1845. Reprint: New York: Garland Publishing, 1980), 5.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Dances would be held periodically in the community. Since there was an exchange of money for his services, it seems that the boy was already starting to be treated like a travelling musician.

²⁵ Carleton, *Tales*, 5.

²⁶ Piper Thomas O'Hannigan (1803-?) was trained for four years. (O'Neill, *Irish Minstrels and Musicians*, 203).

²⁷ A *patron* or pattern is a celebration of the feast day of a local (patron) saint. The day included religious activities followed by a fair-like atmosphere, which includes music, dancing, and other social activities. After parish disapproval of the increasingly lavish form of this occasion (rather than religious), pattern declined and eventually ceased to be practised by the 1870s.

²⁸ O'Neill, *Irish Folk Music*, 281.

for a specified duration of time.²⁹ The length of their stay usually lasted from one week to a month on average.³⁰ During their visit the itinerant piper or fiddler would provide music for crossroad dances,³¹ "house parties", penny dances and country fairs."³²

Education of the Travelling Instrumentalist

I draw on O'Neill's chapter "Famous Performers on the Irish or Union Pipes in the Eighteenth and Early Part of the Nineteenth Centuries"³³ for information on the movements of Irish pipers. Although there is information on gentlemen pipers, non-travellers and musicians outside of the temporal scope of this thesis, the information included here is relevant to the first half of the nineteenth century. Based on the information provided in O'Neill's chapter, the following pipers travelled extensively outside of Ireland and show evidence of significant skill, education or evidence of greater potential opportunity.

²⁹ Feldman and O'Doherty, 34.

³⁰ O'Neill, *Irish Folk Music*, 281.

³¹ Crossroad dances are dances held just outside the community at a crossroad.

³² Feldman and O'Doherty, 34.

³³ O'Neill, *Irish Minstrels and Musicians*, 194-216.

Table 3.3
Notable Irish Travelling Pipers

Name of Piper	County of Birth	Class	Counties or City Visited	Evidence of Education/Skill
Patrick Courtney	?	Unspecified	Scotland and England	▶ Played Convent Gardens ▶ Composer
Mr. O'Farrell	Limerick	Unspecified	England	▶ several works published including an important treatise on the pipes
William Talbot	Tipperary	Peasantry	England	▶ played for George IV and performed in most London theatres
Edmund Keating Hyland	Tipperary	Peasantry	Dublin	▶ composer ▶ played for King George IV
John Murphy	?	Unspecified	Scotland and England	▶ published a collection of airs

Like the travelling musician, the labourer moved to where he could improve his economic gains. From the chart we can see that moving often involved different and unique opportunities that were usually not available in their home communities or in the immediately surrounding areas. **Figure 3.3** illustrates the movement of musicians on information found in O'Neill's *Irish Minstrels and Musicians*.

Figure 3.3³⁴
Migration of the Travelling Musician

**Records on Pipers
Place of Birth and
Death (to show
mobility)**

(the move occurred in the
middle are late nineteenth
century)

Owen Brennan

b. Mohill, Lietrim
d. U.S.A.

Edwar Frahar

b. Clanwilliam,
Tipperary
d. U.S.A.

Edward Lee

b. Ballylander,
Limerick
d. U.S.A.

**Edmund Keating
Hyland**

b. Cahir, Tipperary
d. Dublin

Thomas O'Harrigan

b. Cahir, Tipperary
d. Bray, Wicklow.

Patrick Flannery

b. Ballisnasloe,
Galway
d. U.S.A.

Bynre Family

Old Jemmy

James

Thomas

b. Shangarry, Carlow
d. Kockmarshal,
Wexford

John

b. Shangarry, Carlow
d. U.S.A.



³⁴ Ibid., 194-221.

Travel Habits

The most common practice of the travelling musician was to travel alone but they were also known to travel in groups.³⁵ The itinerant's main circuit was made up of parishes and houses in rural Ireland (approximately ninety percent of the country). It would be every year or two would begin anew. Musicians or dancing masters stayed in each community ranging from one week to six weeks. Travelling instrumentalists were the most common in the province of Connaught.³⁶ The travelling habits of the ballad singer will be discussed in detail later in this chapter.

The distance travelled by the itinerant musician was usually limited because he had limited resources to aid in his travels (unlike the harper who had noble patronage and were provided with horses and guides). Many of them walked to the communities in their circuit although there are accounts of some pipers having another method of travel.³⁷ Breandan Breathnach gives the figure of ten square miles as the circuit area of the dancing master.³⁸ Whether this information is transferable to all travelling instrumentalist is unknown, but since the musician and the dancing master travelled together performing a joint function, there must be a certain percentage of the travelling musician population for which this figure may be accurate. In the accounts of early nineteenth-century ballad singers (see **Appendix**

³⁵ In the accounts travelling practices there is almost no mention of guides, canes or dogs that might have been employed by the blind musicians.

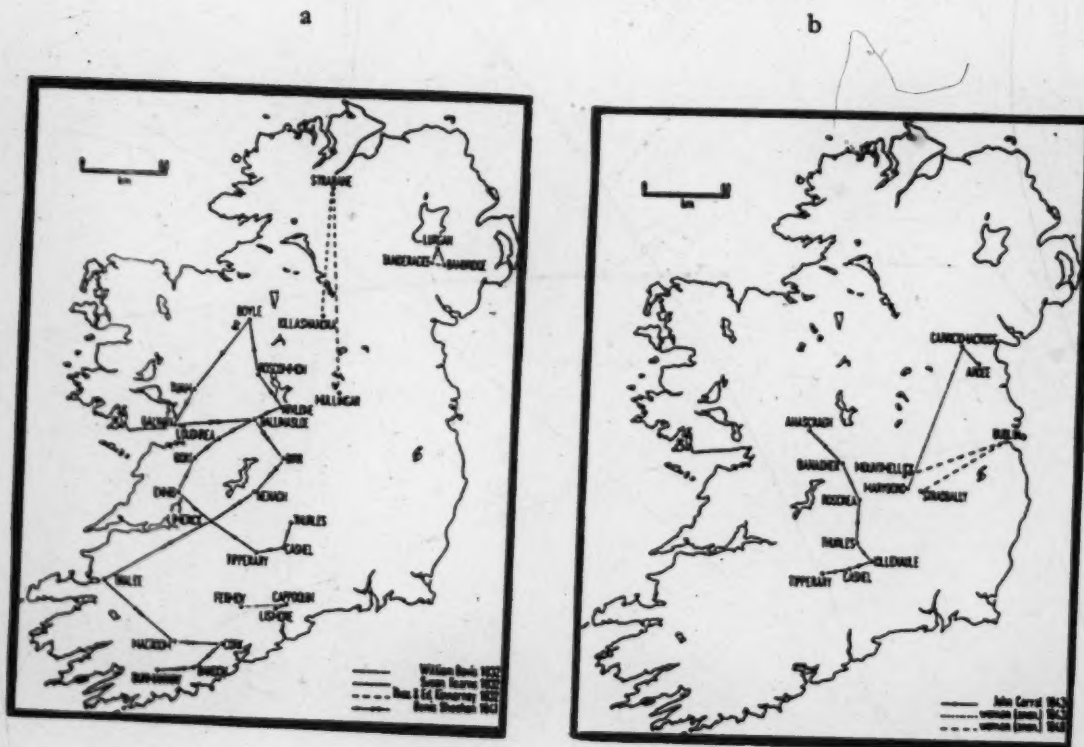
³⁶ Carleton, *Tales*, 154.

³⁷ There is an account of piper Owen Brennan accompanying his friends leaving to the United States in a donkey cart, playing his pipes as he went along. (O'Neill, *Irish Minstrels and Musicians*, 215)

³⁸ Breathnach, 50.

5) there is no mention of the method they used to travel. According to the known circuits of a few ballad singers (Figure 3.4) the travels spanned from a small area basically within one county to about five hundred miles (about half of Ireland) travelled by Denis Sheehan.

Figure 3.4³⁹
Mapping the Travels of the Ballad Singer (a,b)



These musicians (travelling instrumentalists especially) owned no land that would require maintenance and cultivation. Renting land would only add seasonal constrictions and limit their travels. In most cases the travelling musician did not have their own lodgings or a family (wife or children).

There were other musicians who travelled more extensively. Travelling pipers were the most likely to make visits to England (they took advantage of the demand and catered to the higher classes), while other travelling musicians were likely to permanently migrate to countries such as Australia, England, Scotland or the United States. O'Neill's "Chapter XIX: Famous Performers on the Irish or Union Pipe in the Eighteenth and Early Part of the Nineteenth Century" in *Irish Minstrels and Musicians*, gives a description and whatever fragmented information that was available on each piper.

Individual versus Group Patronage

The Individual

The most profitable practice was to maximise the number of patrons. The best way to do this was to give private lessons in dance and music. To increase patronage further the dancing master would even allow his students to pay by the step. This is indicative of the flexibility that was needed to capitalise on all the opportunities available during visits to each community.

The travelling instrumentalist presumably gave music lessons to the individual. There are only indirect references to this practice saying that the musician compensated for his lodgings and the hospitality of the host farmer by supplying lessons to his children. The lessons were most likely held in the homes of the student. Other than through lessons, the travelling instrumentalist was mostly employed for the enjoyment and patronage of a group for dance music.

³⁹ Maura Murphy, "The Ballad Singer and the Role of the Seditious Ballads in Nineteen-Century Ireland: Dublin Castle View", *Ulster Folk Life* 25, (1979), 91.

The Group

The dancing master also held group dances for those who would not be inclined to take private lessons either out of the concern of cost or a preference for a group dynamic. Group dances were held that incorporated both sexes, less gifted dancers, and older couples. Catering to the environment to encourage increased patronage was invaluable to the dancing master's survival.

These group dances naturally involved the use of a travelling instrumentalist. Whether in the presence of a dancing master or alone, these minstrels were associated with the social interaction of the community through dance.

* * *

Now that I have briefly outlined some general practices of the travelling musician, I would like to present the details available on the specific type of musician.

The Pipers

The Piper as the Successors of the Harpers' Tradition

Without going into a complete history of the pipes, I would like to describe a bit of background information. The uniqueness of pipe players comes primarily from their relationship with the harpers. Before the new developments in the construction of the pipes (starting in the late seventeenth century), these instruments were used in battles. Pipers, playing the *piob mor*⁴⁰ (war pipes), would literally lead the battle. Their function was to

⁴⁰ Piob Mor (War pipes) at funerals, football and hurling matches. (O'Neill, *Irish Minstrels and Musicians*, 42)

"encourage their troops with spirited war tunes, until death or defeat silenced their strains."⁴¹ The use of pipes for the purpose of war has been recorded up until the seventeenth century. As the harp was peaking in popularity in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the bagpipe and union pipes were being modified, and by the middle of the eighteenth century, pipe players vied with harpers for popularity and fame.⁴² One source claims that the piper became the favourite instrument in the "primitive provinces" of Munster and Connaught but he was particularly rare in the northern regions of Ireland.⁴³

In the second half of the eighteenth century pipers started to dominate the music scene while the number of harpers was already dwindling. In the early nineteenth century, pipers were considered "closer [than the harper] to the hearts of the bulk of the people."⁴⁴ The piper was one of them and his patrons were almost exclusively amongst the peasant class.⁴⁵ Produced from this lower class, the contemporary piper was not the direct product (in most cases) of the gentry or the old Celtic race. While the nobility and the Irish gentry only occasionally used the services of the pipers, Carleton claims that pipers were always given a degree of respect because of their connection with the "old feudal spirit".⁴⁶ For a time the harpers and the pipers walked the same ground and on occasion catered to a similar

⁴¹ Ibid., 36.

⁴² Ibid., 152.

⁴³ Carleton, *Tales*, 154.

⁴⁴ O'Neill, *Irish Minstrels and Musicians*, 152.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 36.

⁴⁶ Carleton, *Tales*, 154.

high-class patron. Thus, it is easy to see how descriptions of the practices of the pipers would be associated with those of the harper.

On the most literal level, the itinerant harper, piper and fiddle player are travelling instrumentalists. The difference comes into play mainly when one looks at the particular way these musicians were perceived and treated by their patrons. When making a distinction between the harper and the travelling instrumentalists the ideological and political implications play an integral role. A tangible difference was in their patronage. Harpers received patronage from the elite while the travelling instrumentalist⁴⁷ catered to the lower classes. When one takes into account the status and symbolic nature of the harper and his harp, the perception of a noble heritage and ties to "authentic" music of the Old Celtic race, a further distinction can be made. It is Edward Bunting who makes the claim that the Irish harper was fundamentally different from other travelling instrumentalist and ballad singers. When describing the harper, Bunting calls them "the last representatives of a class so famous in song and history."⁴⁸ In the days of the chieftain overlordship and caste organisation, the harper had a very well defined place. He had a high status, and according to Artelia Court, harpers, along with priest and poets, were considered "men of special gifts"⁴⁹ that travelled. The harper was part of an educated class that was closely connected to priests and the aristocracy.⁵⁰ Along with the travelling bards⁵¹ and priests, the harpers made up the only "centralised political system" that could be called a "national institution".⁵²

⁴⁷ The term travelling instrumentalist refers to the travelling piper and fiddle player.

⁴⁸ Charlotte Milligan Fox, *Annals of the Irish Harpers* (London: Smith & Co., 1911), 106. (Taken from Bunting, *The Ancient Music of Ireland* (Dublin: Hodges and Smith, 1840))

⁴⁹ Myles Dillon, *Early Irish Studies* (Reprint: Dublin, 1959), quoted in Artelia Court, *Puck of Droms: Lives and Literature of the Irish Tinkers* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1985), 10.

The travelling instrumentalist was not necessarily a figure that the elite could point to with pride. Their primary patrons and the instrumentalists themselves were from the peasantry class, whom the elite thought to be barbarous, and it was assumed that their crudeness was translated into the music they played and even in the manner in which they played. While the harper was considered to be part of an old Celtic race of nobles, the travelling musician was just the unfortunate blind son⁵⁰ of the peasantry who resorted to music as his only form of productive labour.

In the minds of some nineteenth-century writers (like Bunting) the travelling musician was simply an insignificant member of the peasantry class; to others, the connection between the travelling instrumentalist and the "original" travelling musician, the harper, was not that far of a stretch. Not only did the harper share many similarities with the travelling instrumentalist of the first half of the nineteenth century, it is also important to note that the written histories of these musicians were both being produced at about the same time. So although the harper and other instrumentalists were ideologically different, they were intentionally and unavoidably compared.

The pipe player has frequently been portrayed as analogous to the harper in nineteenth-century contemporary literature. In O'Neill's *Irish Minstrels and Musicians*, union pipe players are described as virtually alike.

Down to within comparatively recent times, capable performers on the Union pipes, like their predecessors the harpers, were attached to the households of families of distinction, not alone in Ireland but also in Scotland and England occasionally. No

⁵⁰ Court, 11.

⁵¹ A bard is one of the Celtic order of poets or one who composed and recited epic or heroic poems. They often accompanied themselves on the harp.

⁵² Court, 10.

⁵³ This is a generalisation.

little honor and prestige accrued to the position or connection, but to regard the office as hereditary is, we think, claiming too much. Musical talent is more sporadic than inherited, and the mediocrity of famous men's sons has become proverbial; the dullness of the bard O'Carolan's only son being a notable instance.⁵⁴

The next excerpt makes a distinction between the two types of pipers that developed; the noble generation and the people's piper.

In the early years of the nineteenth century, when the world-renowned harpers had vanished...great performers on the melodious Union pipes flourished in goodly numbers. Like the harpers, not a few of them were attached to families of wealth and distinction, regardless of racial origin, while yet others—true minstrels—led a wandering life. They were in fact so much a part of the ordinary institutions of the country that but casual and meagre references, out of all proportion to their numbers, is to be found in Irish literature concerning them, from the early centuries to the present time; and that little which has been preserved to us in print we owe, in a great measure, to travelers and writers in whose veins flow the blood of the invader.⁵⁵

Here is an account of a piper in the 1850s from Charles J. Kickham's (1826-1882)

Knocknagow; or the Homes of Tipperary (1887). This work includes anecdotes of the lives of the peasantry in county Tipperary.

"That's the celebrated Irish piper," she replied. "I am surprised to see him here. I did not think he attended country weddings."

"I suppose he goes round among the nobility and gentry, as we are told the harpers used to do."

"He does, and he has a beautiful little pony the countess gave him. But I suppose he's stopping at present with the priests, and Father Hannigan has brought him with him."⁵⁶

The parallel between pipers and the harpers is quite clearly articulated here. What follows is a characterisation of the piper himself.

⁵⁴ O'Neill, *Irish Minstrels and Musicians*, 207.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 437-8.

⁵⁶ Charles J. Kickham, *Knocknagow*, Introduction by Robert Lee Wolfe (Dublin: J. Duffy, 1879), (Reprint: New York: Garland Publishing, 1979), 215.

He's Quite the Character!

According to William Carleton, the travelling piper is a clear definable person with a distinct character. The following is how Carleton defines the minstrel piper in his work *Tales and Sketches Illustrating the Character of the Irish Peasantry* (1845). "The Irish piper, from the necessary monotony of his life, is generally a man of much simplicity of character—not, however, without a case of humour, which is single-minded and shrewd."⁵⁷ Before I relay the rest of Carleton's description of the "true piper", I will insert a description of two pipers that attended a wedding to offer their services. This description is taken from Kickham's *Knocknagow*.

The two pipers were tall, and gaunt, and yellow, a striking contrast in every way to Mr. Flaherty. One was arrayed in a soldier's grey watch-coat, with the number of the regiment stamped in white figures on the back, and the other wore a coarse blue body-coat, with what appeared to be the sleeves of another old grey watch-coat sewed to it between the shoulders and the elbows. Both wore well-patched corduroy knee-breeches and bluish worsted stockings[,] with brogues of unusual thickness of sole, well paved with heavy nails. Their rude brass-mounted instruments were in keeping with their garments. The sheep-skin bag of one had no covering whatever, while that of the other was covered with faded plaid, "cross-barred with green and yellow."⁵⁸

The above description portrays the Irish piper as being part of the peasantry class. His clothing was a physical symbol of the poverty of this class despite the comparison made between them and the harpers. The following description of the ideal piper is exactly that, an ideal that is illustrated by Carleton. The agenda of the elite can be found in this idealised description.

The man, however, who ought to sit as the true type and representative of the Irish piper is he whose whole life is passed among the peasantry, with the exception of an occasional elevation to the lord's hall or the squire's parlour—who is equally

⁵⁷ Carleton, *Tales*, 155.

⁵⁸ Kickham, 217-8.

conversant with the Irish and English languages—has neither child nor wife, house or home, but circulates from one village or farmhouse to another, carrying mirth, amusement, and a warm welcome with him, wherever he goes, and filling the hearts of the young with happiness and delight. The true Irish piper must wear a frieze coat, corduroy breeches, grey woollen stockings, smoke tobacco, drink whiskey, and take snuff, for it is absolutely necessary, from his peculiar position among the people, that he should be a walking encyclopædia of Irish social usages. And so he generally is; for to the practice and cultivation of these the simple tenor of his inoffensive life is devoted.⁵⁹

Carleton goes on to cite Piper Gaynor as fitting this model exactly, but his description of Gaynor conflicts with the above definition of a true piper.

Gaynor was a blind piper of the early nineteenth century who travelled through the counties of Louth, and occasionally through Meath and Moneaghan⁶⁰ (see **Appendix 1**).

Despite Carleton's assertion that he was a carbon copy of the "the peasant's piper", as described above, he was not. Firstly, he was married but later became a widower. Although his true patrons (those who were the primary source for his income) were, according to the above definition, the peasantry, he had a degree of arrogance⁶¹ that prevented him from playing the beloved dance music of the lower classes.

...though willing to play in a respectable farmer's house for the amusement of the family, he never could be prevailed on to play at a *common dance*, and his reason, which I have often heard him urge, were such as exhibit the spirit and intellect of the man. "*My music*", said he, "isn't for *the feet or the floor*, but for *the ear and the heart*; you'll get plenty of *foot pipers*, but I'm none o' them."⁶²

⁵⁹ Carleton, *Tales*, 159.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ This is a suggestion of dignity of the nobles of the past.

⁶² Carleton, *Tales*, 160-1.

It is here that Gaynor, according to Carleton's own recollections, does not fit into the majority of the travelling pipers who did cater to the dancing needs of the peasantry. Gaynor was essentially an exception.⁶³

According to the account of an Irish wedding (given in Chapter Four p. 138-9), the piper was the most prominent musician being well paid and given almost equal status to the priest in attendance. At a time of extreme celebration and a display of surplus, the piper was the travelling musician of choice. The account on page 138-9 informs us that the piper was second in status to the priest.

The Fiddlers

Although there were fewer fiddlers than pipers, fiddlers were still in popular demand. O'Neill claims that the fiddle was more "lasting in sentiment"⁶⁴ than the pipes. It is in the opinion of William Carleton that the fiddle ought to be the national instrument because it catered to the people's love of dance and "it awakens the most tenderest and most agreeable emotions."⁶⁵ According to Carleton, who was raised in county Tyrone, his native parish had about four or five fiddle players.⁶⁶ What is not clear about this figure is whether he meant

⁶³ The gap between the idealised and the real piper is exposed here even through Carleton's own example but this escapes the author. Perhaps, like in the writings of Bunting, the reader is supposed to take the scholar at their word and accept the idealist propaganda along with the more covert agenda at hand.

⁶⁴ O'Neill, *Irish Minstrels and Musicians*, 359.

⁶⁵ Carleton, *Tales*, 2.

⁶⁶ The fact that there were so many fiddlers in Carleton's community may have given him a certain bias to the importance of the fiddler to Ireland. (Ibid., 6.)

that they originated from this parish and spent most of their time travelling around the county or if some of them were permanent residents of the area.⁶⁷

Carleton gives an account of the types of venues in which the fiddler played. The full quote is given in **Appendix 3: An Account of Irish Dancing in a Rural Community**.

The following text is taken from **Appendix 3** but is included here to paint a clearer picture of fiddler.

Barny [the travelling fiddler] was now silent for some time, which silence was produced by the industry his displayed in assailing the substantial refreshments before him. When he had concluded he repast he once more tasted the liquor...and continued playing their favourite tunes, and amusing them with anecdotes, both true and false, until the hour drew nigh when his services were expected by the young men and maidens who had assembled to dance in the barn. ...The Irish dance, like every other assembly composed of Irishmen and Irish women, presents the spectators with those traits which enter into our conception of rollicking fun and broad humour.⁶⁸

The barn in which the dance took place is also described in this passage.

The barn in which they danced on this occasion was a large one. Around the walls were placed as many seats as could be spared from the neighbours' houses; these were eked out by sacks of corn laid length-wise, logs of round timber, old creels, iron pots with their bottoms turned up, and some of them in their usual position. On these were the youngsters seated, many of the "boys" with their sweethearts on their knees, the arms of the fair ones lovingly around their necks; and, on the contrary, many of the young women with their bachelors on their laps, their own necks also gallantly encircled by the arms of their admirers. Up in a corner sat Barny, surrounded by the seniors of the village, sawing the fiddle with indefatigable vigour, and leading the conversation with equal spirit. Indeed, his laugh was the loudest, and his joke the best; whilst, ever and anon, his music became perfectly furious—that is to say, when he rasped and fiddle with a desperate effort "to overtake the dancers", from whom, in the heat of the conversation, he had unwittingly lagged behind.⁶⁹

A rare description of the practice of payment of the musician is recounted as well.

⁶⁷ Carleton mentions Mickey M'Rorey as one of the fiddle players of this native parish.

⁶⁸ Carleton, *Traits*, 332, 340.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 340.

During stated periods of the night, those who took the most prominent part in the dance, got a plate and hat, with which they went round the youngsters, to make collections for the fiddler. Barny reserved his best and most sarcastic jokes for these occasions; for so correct was his ear, that he felt little difficulty in detecting those whose contributions to him were such as he did not relish.⁷⁰

The author of this passage includes a drawing of what the scene might have looked like. I have included it in **Figure 3.5**.

Figure 3.5⁷¹
Barn Dance



⁷⁰ Ibid., 343-344.

⁷¹ Ibid., between 342-343.

Guides of the Blind Travelling Piper or Fiddler

Besides a few accounts, mention of the use of guides is almost non-existent when examining the literature on the travelling instrumentalist. Of the accounts that do exist, William Carleton describes a time when he served as a guide, accompanying fiddler Mickey M'Rorey.⁷² At the age of seven, Carleton walked about three miles to retrieve the visiting instrumentalist in the town of Kilnahushogue, county Tipperary. There is another account of a piper named Johnny McDonough who had his father as a guide, taking him to play his pipes along the road to fairs or markets.⁷³ Other literature, like that on the practices of the Irish travelling harper (who made more use of guides),⁷⁴ also neglect to make much mention of the presence of guides.⁷⁵

Income and Supplementary Income

There are only a few mentions of the income of the travelling instrumentalist in the first half of the nineteenth century. The income of the travelling minstrel is only recorded in the setting when music is being provided with the presence of a dancing master. In 1816 (county Wexford) the musician was paid six pence and a half-penny, and in the 1850s (county Kerry) the sum was five pence for each quarter (a six week period).⁷⁶

⁷² Carleton, *Tales*, 7.

⁷³ O'Neill, *Irish Minstrels and Musicians*, 208.

⁷⁴ They were able to afford guides because their rich patrons supplied all they needed.

⁷⁵ The exception is Arthur O'Neill in his *Memoirs*.

⁷⁶ Breathnach, 51.

The travelling instrumentalist served many functions in addition to supplying music for dances and music lessons. By virtue of the itinerant nature of his profession, the travelling musician served as a kind of news carrier or mail service.⁷⁷ Part of the instrumentalist's visits included time when his patrons would gather around and listen to the stories of his travels.

...pipers, fiddlers, and dancing masters of traditional times acquired an endless fund of anecdotes. Almost all were masters of story telling, and not a few were keen of wit and ready at repartee and rhyming.⁷⁸

After playing the old bard's exquisite air, the youngsters, myself among the rest, joined in the dance. The punch being then introduced, a happy night was spent in chat, music, rich old legends, and traditions, principally furnished by Gaynor himself; who, in addition to his many social and amusing qualities, possessed in a high degree the free and fluent powers peculiar to the old Irish senachie.⁷⁹

Another known talent of the travelling musician was their ability to mend and even construct instruments for their patrons (and for their own use). William Talbot used his time to tune and string pianos, organs⁸⁰ and mending other instruments.⁸¹ Talbot was known for constructing his own pipes, which were very unique in their workmanship⁸² (it is not known whether or not he crafted pipes for others). Mickey M'Rorey fashioned small fiddles which he gave to his students.⁸³ As we will see with the dancing master, the travelling

⁷⁷ O'Neill, *Irish Minstrels and Musicians*, 152.^o

⁷⁸ Ibid., 434.

⁷⁹ A senachie is an Irish storyteller. Carleton, *Tales*, 163.

⁸⁰ The lower class patron did not obviously have pianos or organs to tune so these were his higher-class patrons.

⁸¹ Carleton, *Tales*, 158.

⁸² Ibid.

musician could also play a part in teaching social graces in his patrons ("...he should be a walking encyclopædia of Irish social usages...").⁸⁴

William Carleton in his desire to "give a panorama of Irish life among the people—comprising at one view all the strong points of their general character—their loves, sorrows, superstitions, piety, amusements, crimes and virtues" offers his audience *Traits and Stories of the Irish Peasantry* (1869). The travelling fiddler makes an appearance in the story entitled "The Midnight Mass". Barny, an itinerant fiddler, arrives at a mountain side community for the purpose of supplying music. Carleton describes Barny's additional skills in the following manner.

In fact, Barny, besides being a fiddler, was a senachie of the first water; could tell a story, or trace a genealogy as well as any man living, and draw the long bow in either capacity much better than he could in the practice of his more legitimate profession.⁸⁵

No doubt the instrumentalist had additional skills that may not have been mentioned in the literature I examined.

The Dance Master

The dance master is included in this chapter because an understanding of this profession is essential to learning about travelling musicians in nineteenth-century Ireland. William Carleton articulates that "music and dancing" are as dependent on one and "the other as cause and effect."⁸⁶ More than this, there are many parallels between the lifestyle

⁸³ The impression given in the source is that these fiddles were gifts, whether he also sold his fiddles as a source of income is not outlined. Carleton, *Tales*, 9.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 159.

⁸⁵ Carleton, *Traits*, 331.

and practices of the dance master and travelling instrumentalist (it was common for these men to travel together to provide a joint function for their patrons). Carleton even goes as far as to say "dancing...is merely little else than a mere happy and agreeable method of enjoying music..."⁸⁷

The dancing master appears in the social life of Ireland's countryside in the second half of the eighteenth century⁸⁸ reaching the peak of their popularity in the early part of the nineteenth century.

Dancing is very general among the poor people, almost universal in every cabin. Dancing-masters of their own rank travel through the country from cabin to cabin, with a piper or blind fiddler, and the pay is sixpence a quarter. It is an absolute system of education.⁸⁹

Similar to the travelling musician the dance master received his main patronage from the peasantry (most likely from small farmers but one source claims that the cottier⁹⁰ employed these services for their children.)⁹¹ The dancing master was usually put up at the home of the most prosperous farmer of the community who would also provide the venue for lessons and dances (a barn or the use of his kitchen). In return, the children of this farmer would receive free dance or music lessons.⁹² If a single person could not provide the

⁸⁶ Carleton, *Tales*, 15.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Breathnach, 39.

⁸⁹ Arthur Young, *A Tour in Ireland, 1776-1779* (New York: Cassell & Company, Limited, 1887), 146.

⁹⁰ The cottier is a labourer who worked for a farmer and instead of cash payment, he was given a cabin, a small plot of land (to grow crops to feed his family) and perhaps turf-cutting and grazing rights.

⁹¹ Breathnach, 49.

⁹² Ibid., 50.

means to the visiting guest, the dancing master's students would vie with each other for the honour of putting him up for the night.⁹³ According to Breathnach, there are one or two instances of coarsely constructed edifices, with a roof of straw, erected by the local people to give the dance master a venue in which to perform.⁹⁴

Generally dance masters were males without a wife or family. Because they were constantly travelling and receiving accommodation, there was no need for an attachment to land or cabin.⁹⁵ Like the travelling musician (who may have set out with the dancing master on occasion) they would migrate by the means available to them which was mostly by foot. Breandán Breathnach gives the figure of ten square miles as the standard size of the circuit of the dancing master.⁹⁶ A territory would be etched out and the dance master was welcomed into a community for an average of six weeks.⁹⁷ In some cases the dance master made an extended visit teaching dance in the community's hedge school⁹⁸.

What follows are descriptions of the dancing master. Although these examples could be described as characterisations, the details given are part of understanding the practices of this professional.

...the dancing master in the early years of the last century portray a somewhat whimsical figure, pretentious in dress and affection a grandiloquence not sustained by his schooling. Caroline hat, swallow-tail coat and tight knee-breeches, white

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ O'Neill, *Irish Minstrels and Musicians*, 421.

⁹⁶ Breathnach, 50.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ See Glossary for definition.

stockings and turn-pumps, cane with a silver head and silk-tassell—thus accoutered the dancing master was obviously a cut above the wandering piper and fiddler.”

Perhaps the most complete and comprehensive source on the dancing master comes from William Carleton's *Tales and Sketches Illustrating the Character of the Irish Peasantry* (1845) in his Chapter entitled “Backram-Back, The Country Dancing-Master.”¹⁰⁰ Although the chapter speaks, for the most part, specifically about Backram-Back (a dancing master familiar to Carleton) it includes general observations made about these men in general.

Indeed, the old dancing-master had some very marked outlines of character particular to himself. His dress, for instance, was far above the fiddler's, and this was the pride of his heart. He also made it a point to wear castor, or Caroline hat, be the same “shocking bad” or otherwise; but above all things, his soul within him was set upon a watch...He contrived to carry an ornamental staff, made of ebony, hickory, mahogany, or some rare description of cane—which, if possible, had a silver head and a silk tassell. This the dancing-masters in general seemed to consider as a kind of baton or wand of office, without which I never yet knew one of them to go. But of all parts of dress used to discriminate them from the fiddler, we must place, as standing above the rest, the dancing-master's pumps and stockings, for shoes he seldom wore. The utmost limit of their ambition appeared to be such a jaunty neatness about that part of them in which the genius of their business lay, as might indicate the extraordinary lightness and activity which were expected from them by the people, in whose opinion the finest stocking, the lightest shoe, and the most symmetrical leg, uniformly denoted the most accomplished teacher.¹⁰¹

In addition to a general description of the average dancing master, Carleton supplies a very specific description of the Backram-Back.

Buckram-Back was a dapper light little fellow, with a rich Tipperary brogue, crossed by a lofty strain of illegitimate English, which he picked up whilst abroad in the army. His habiliments sat as tight upon him as he could readily wear them, and were all of the shabby-genteel class. His crimped black coat was a closely worn second-hand, and his crimped face quite as much of a second-hand as the coat. I think I see his little pumps, little white stockings, his coaxed drab breeched, his hat, smart in its

⁹⁹ Ibid., 49.

¹⁰⁰ Carleton, *Tales*, 15-29.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 18-19.

cock but brushed to a polish and standing upon three hairs, together with his tight questionably-coloured gloves, all before me...¹⁰²

The above description suggests that Buckram-Back's clothing attempted to be of the "genteel class" but his wardrobe was "crimped", "closely worn", "second hand" and even "questionably-coloured". Even though the primary patronage of these men came from the peasantry, they were supposed to be quite comfortable and trained in the proper mannerisms used in the homes of the gentry.

Figure 3.6 depicts a scene where dancing took place in a fairly large thatched house.

Figure 3.6¹⁰³
House Dance



¹⁰² Ibid., 20-1.

¹⁰³ Samuel Watson "The Irish Jig" (1845), plate in *A New History of Ireland: V Ireland Under the Union, 1801-70*, edited by W. E. Vaughan (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), plate 16.

Painted by Samuel Watson in 1845, the presence of a large fireplace, furnishings of various sorts, and dishes on the mantle seem to support that this indeed was used for gatherings of many kinds. In Figure 3.5 (page 69), taken from Carleton's *Traits and Stories of the Irish Peasantry*, the peasantry are shown celebrating before and after Christmas mass in a large barn.

Dance Instruction and Dances

The dance master gave instruction to individuals and to groups. The only source that gives a precise number of the dance master's students is again found in Carleton's work. In the discussion of a rivalry, it is mentioned that there are twelve students from each dancing master that took part in a competition.¹⁰⁴ Although these competitions are not described in any detail it seems that the competitions may have been as simple as two men dancing, in turn, in front of an audience, the prize being only the respect of the community. In the specific case of Backram-Back, he conducted his lessons in an uninhabited cabin after labour hours.¹⁰⁵ Unfortunately Carleton does not provide any specifics on the number of people that this dancing master taught, saying only "he undertook to teach every one of us".¹⁰⁶ He does however indicate that the students were from both sexes. The lessons that Carleton describes are not only for dancing but also for the proper comportment of the sexes when dealing with the other.

Two of the reapers slashed away at the oats; the third mounted the prostrate door and took his dancing lessons under the supervision of Doyles, while Byrne seated in

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 28.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 22.

¹⁰⁶ Carleton, *Tales*, 22.

his chair close by supplied the enlivening music. Each dancer's term of practice lasted while one swath was being reaped across the field; and thus the trio danced and reaped alternately throughout the lifelong day exception when food or refreshments were partaken. The result was most gratifying, for not only was the work of three men done by two, but each dancer had also his full meed of practice into the bargain.¹⁰⁷

In addition to individual lessons, visiting dance masters would also lead round or group dance lessons for the less gifted students and older couples.¹⁰⁸ These group lessons, according to an account in *Irish Minstrels and Musicians*, were held in the winter inside a barn for both sexes for those from ten to twenty years of age.¹⁰⁹ An account can be found of this in Carleton's story "The Midnight Mass".

It was upon the advent of one of those festivals—Christmas...were making preparations to celebrate with the usual hilarity. They cleared out their barn in order to have a dance Christmas-eve...there was no doubt but that it would be numerously attended.¹¹⁰

Perhaps the most anticipated function with the arrival of the dance master (who came with his own musician or played the fiddle himself)¹¹¹ was the conduction of dances. A big part of these dances was the entertainment of the patrons by the solo dancing of the dance master. The standard practice was for a door to be taken off its hinges or a cleared table would be used to provide a platform for the dancer.¹¹²

¹⁰⁷ O'Neill, *Irish Minstrels and Musicians*, 219.

¹⁰⁸ Breathnach, 53.

¹⁰⁹ O'Neill, *Irish Minstrels and Musicians*, 421.

¹¹⁰ Carleton, *Tales*, 327.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 18.

¹¹² *Ibid.*

Income of the Dancing Master

Information on the fees of the dancing master for individual lessons are scantily recorded but through this documentation, fortunately the income of the accompanying musician is also given. The following chart summarises what information is available on the income of these two professions.

Table 3.4
Income of the Dancing Master and the Travelling Instrumentalist¹¹³

Year	Income: Per Quarter ¹¹⁴	
	Dancing Master	Travelling Instrumentalist
1776-1779	6 pence	--
1816 (Wexford)	13 Irish pence	6 pence and ½ penny (for a quarter of nine nights)
1850s (Kerry)	5 pence	5 pence

The dance master received payment for his services in diverse ways and in many different venues. For those that had limited funds the dance master was employed at a weekly rate or even a certain charge was assigned by the dancing step.¹¹⁵

"Benefit" nights generated income for the dance master and the travelling musician. Students and outsiders from other communities attended this function contributing to the general expenses and donating to the dancing master's collection.¹¹⁶ The collection would total a couple of shillings or a half a crown.¹¹⁷ Another reference to the passing of a

¹¹³ Breathnach, 51.

¹¹⁴ This was a period of six weeks (Ibid.).

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 53.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 51.

¹¹⁷ Carleton, *Tales*, 18.

collection is mentioned with the fiddler Mickey M'Rorey¹¹⁸ and in the tale "The Midnight Mass."

"During stated periods of the night, those who took the most prominent part in the dance, got a plate and hat, with which they went round the youngsters, to make collections for the fiddler."¹¹⁹

These nights were another way that the dancing master and the travelling musician could attain more income by making the area they serviced wider. They invited the attendance of members of the local community and encouraged the attendance of people from neighbouring communities. These outside communities may have been without the proper resources to sustain the visit of either of these professionals. Benefit nights, like fairs and *patrons*, were worth making a short trip to enjoy some much-needed entertainment. Two of these nights were generally held, the first was the night after the dance master's arrival and the other was about a month after classes had started.¹²⁰

Supplementary Activities of the Dancing Master

Like the other travelling musicians, dancing masters did not earn sufficient income exclusively through instruction and performance. In addition to offering their services for dance lessons, dance masters often had other skills they utilised to make additional income, although the is documentation of the dance master's supplementary employment is scanty. With the importance of music to their profession, these men very often played instruments

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 13.

¹¹⁹ Carleton, *Traits*, 342.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

(such as fiddle or flute.)¹²¹ There are also accounts of dancing masters who held fencing schools.¹²² William Carleton, in *Tales and Sketches Illustrating the Character of the Irish Peasantry* (1845), states that fencing (or cudgel-playing) classes were almost as common in the time of dancing schools, and in many cases they were both run by the same teacher.¹²³ The dancing master was a symbol of gentlemanly¹²⁴ status, epitomising control and restraint in his dancing and his carriage (he was seen as a connection to elite culture). It was also his duty, in many ways, to teach the proper comportment to his students.¹²⁵ As mentioned above, the dancing master took on the role of an educator in the modes of courtship.¹²⁶

The Ballad Singer

Although there are some fundamental differences between the travelling singer and the travelling instrumentalist (see **Appendix 4**), there are many parallels in their way of life, and in many of their practices and the types of venues they frequented. The study of the ballad singer is indeed essential to a general understanding of the travelling musician.

¹²¹ O'Neill, *Irish Minstrels and Musicians*, 421.

¹²² Breathnach, 51 and Carleton, *Tales*, 20.

¹²³ Carleton, *Tales*, 20.

¹²⁴ Breathnach, 49.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 51.

¹²⁶ Carleton, *Tales*, 24.

Accounts of the Ballad Singer and their Practices

Who are these Ballad Singers?

Most ballad singers were day labourers or *spailpín*.¹²⁷ Unlike many instrumentalists, they were usually men of good physical health. In fact these men often alternated between being a day labourers and a ballad singer according to profitability. According to Colin Neilands' article "Irish Broadside Ballads: Performers and Performances", the average age of these singers was thirty years old.¹²⁸ Maura Murphy, in her article "The Ballad Singer and the Role of Seditious Ballads in Nineteenth-Century Ireland: Dublin Castle View," supplies concrete examples of men in other professions that switched over to ballad singing. Known ballad singer William Coleman was also a peddler, James Moore was a rag gatherer and there were two cases of military pensioners engaging in ballad singing for their means of subsistence.¹²⁹ In the accounts of early nineteenth-century ballad singers (see **Appendix 5**) there is no mention of the method they used to travel, but one can probably assume that these men used the same travel methods as when they worked their other jobs.

Descriptions of the ballad singer vary depending on the venue in which they performed and by the particular singer observed. Some ballad singers were more professional than others and the techniques they used varied. The following account, given by William Allingham (1824-1889), a prolific writer of poems (editor of *Fraser Magazine* 1874-

¹²⁷ Murphy, 89.

¹²⁸ Neilands, 212.

¹²⁹ Murphy, 89.

9) and a respected commentator or contemporary conditions. Allingham describes a more professional singer who used an ornamented traditional solo style.¹³⁰

The minstrel is found to be a tall, sad, stooping man, about thirty-five; his song, to the very favourite tune of 'Youghal Harbour', is about two faithful lovers; his vocal excellence consists in that he twirls every word several times round his tongue, wrapt in the notes of a soft, husky, tremulous voice. In his style of gracing – which is considered highly artistic, and for which I believe, 'humouring' is the country phrase...¹³¹

The particular man described above seems to be a less common appearance than the less specialised minstrels.

Number of ballad singers

Travelling singers were very common in the first half of the nineteenth century. Although information on their exact numbers is difficult, if not impossible, to determine, fortunately court records from Dublin Castle provide a sample of information about the part of the ballad singer population that was more inclined to sing in policed areas against seditious ballad singing. Making this information readily available to Irish music scholars,¹³² Murphy produces many tables accounting for each arrested ballad singer by county and by year (from 1801-1881). The following is a chart taken from Murphy's article that lays out the number of seditious ballad singers recorded by province.

¹³⁰ Neilands, 219.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Murphy, 79-102.

Table 3.5
Reports on Seditious Ballad Singing from each of the Provinces, 1810-1881¹³³

Province	Pre-1830	1830s	1840s	1850s	1860-1871	1880s	Total
Múnster	5	30	102	7	11	1	156
Leinster	0	16	77	3	4	1	101
Ulster	1	6	37	1	1	0	46
Connacht	3	5	49	0	2	0	59
Unspecified	4	18	0	4	0	0	26
Total for Ireland	13	75	265	15	18	2	388

In the years 1851 and 1861, ballad singers were given their own classification on the census. Murphy includes a separate chart that breaks down the number of ballad singers by gender for these years¹³⁴. I have included a condensed version of this chart below.

Table 3.6
Number of Male and Female Ballad Singers by Province in 1851 and 1861¹³⁵

Province	1851			1861		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Munster	17	13	30	15	14	29
Leinster	21	9	30	4	6	10
Ulster	9	3	12	3	4	7
Connacht	5	6	11	5	7	12
Total	52	31	83	27	31	58

It is clear that the majority of those in this profession were male in 1851 but in 1861 the figures show a greater female population. I can not explain this figure since it requires a great deal of research outside of my study. Notice also that the number of female ballad singers is the same for 1851 and 1861 but the number of males decreases by 52 percent.

¹³³ Ibid., 86.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 85.

Part of explaining these figures would include accounting for the drastic decrease in the number of male ballad singers. According to Murphy, twenty percent of the entire information recorded included statistics on gender, therefore this is only a small sampling of the actual figures in Ireland at the time. Neilands points out that the figures outlined above were no doubt affected by the part-time nature of the ballad singing profession and even their itinerant nature prevented an accurate count of their numbers.¹³⁶ Georges-Denis Zimmermann gives another example of the practices of the minstrel singer. "The announcement of a fair, a race or election would call them to the roads, with a sheet of ballads rolled in their hat or in the tail of their coat. They were a common sight everywhere".¹³⁷

Denis Sheehan gives a definite figure of fifteen singers attending a single fair.¹³⁸

What follows is a commentary made in 1842 by German Johann Georg Kohl in Kilkenny.

On these and similar occasions¹³⁹ of popular excitement in Ireland the most remarkable objects are the ballad-singer, who are in no country so numerous as there. In Kilkenny there were literally twice as many ballad-singers as lamp-posts standing in the street...¹⁴⁰

¹³⁵ Murphy, 85.

¹³⁶ Neilands, 213.

¹³⁷ Georges-Denis Zimmermann, *Songs of Irish Rebellion: Political Street Ballads and Rebel Songs, 1780-1900* (Hatboro: Folklore Associates, Inc., 1967), 22.

¹³⁸ Murphy, 88-89.

¹³⁹ Similar occasions include fairs and markets. These were places of economic exchanges where the peasantry were exposed to politics and controversial songs that played on popular taste.

¹⁴⁰ J. G. Kohl, *Travels in Ireland* (London: 1844) in Zimmermann, 23.

Since the profession was temporary in nature, based on the political agitation of the time, records of the exact numbers of ballad singers for a given location in a certain period of time would be quite difficult.

Other venues for singers and instrumentalists included wakes and funerals.¹⁴¹

William Carleton (1794-1860) recounts his mother's experience as a beloved ballad singer of the time and the various places that her services were required.

In early life, I have often been told by those who had heard her sing, that any previous intimation of her presence at a wake, dance, or other festive occasion, was sure to attract crowds of persons, many from a distance of several miles, in order to hear from her lips the touching old airs of their country¹⁴².

Performing/Performing in Groups

Traditionally, ballad singers performed alone, as can be seen in **Table 3.6** (according to a select sample of singers).

Table 3.7
Patterns of Ballad Singing Groups (1851 and 1861)¹⁴³

Province	1 Woman	1 Man	1 Man and 1 Woman	2 Men	2 Women and 1 Man	Family Groups	Total
Ulster	2	1	1	1	--	--	5
Munster	4	34	4	5	1	--	48
Leinster	2	11	2	3	--	--	18
Connacht	1	12	1	1	--	1	16
TOTAL	9	58	8	10	1	1	87
Percentage	77%		23%				100%

¹⁴¹ Murphy, 90.

¹⁴² William Carleton, *Traits and Stories of the Irish Peasantry* (London: William Tegg, 1869), ix.

¹⁴³ Murphy, 87.

In this sample, seventy seven percent of those performing sang alone. Whether this was the "traditional" way of performing street ballads to the public, a significant percentage of singers performed in groups. These groups were usually no larger than three.¹⁴⁴ Women have been seen travelling with their children to beg (through singing) for money but the distance travelled was very limited (the duration of this practice and the distances travelled would not warrant a professional title). According to the known circuits of a few ballad singers, **Figure 3.4** (page 58), their travels spanned from a small area (basically within one county) to about five hundred miles travelled by Denis Sheehan.

Murphy maps out the routes of three of the ballad singers in her article, they are reproduced in **Figure 3.4**. Some were willing and able to make extensive travels throughout Ireland while others travelled only a few adjacent counties.

The reason for the more frequent mention of the ballad singer over the itinerant instrumentalist, is that his or her product contained words and the ballad singer served a political purpose. The grouping could be between a man and his wife or women travelling with a male.

Ballad Singers at Fairs and Markets

These events involved more than just the enjoyment of music, they also involved the selling of livestock, produce and household items in addition to social interactions. The busy atmosphere made it necessary for the travelling musician to include attention-grabbing gimmicks if they were to earn their wages for the day. For the ballad singer vying for the

¹⁴⁴ Neilands, 216.

attention of a crowd was a standard practice. However, in the accounts of the ballad singers at fairs, descriptions of their practices differ from those noted when they were on a city street corner or within a community. Colin Neiland's article "Irish Broadside Ballads: Performers and Performances" outlines the gimmicks and techniques used according to venue demands. The practices of musicians and dancers were commercial and competitive oriented.¹⁴⁵

There have been numerous accounts of the poor singing quality and lack of musical sensitivity. "Most of them insist on their raucous or shrieking and dismal voices, and on their obvious contempt for the niceties of melody or any variety in rhythm and expression."¹⁴⁶ William Allingham (1824-1889) has also commented on the manner of the vocal quality of the typical ballad singer.

Urging our slow way through the crowd, we come within earshot of a shriller strain, which proceeds from two female vocalists, standing face to face, and yelling down one another's throats...¹⁴⁷

...The copy we quote was purchased from two women, singing it loud and shrill through town, on a fair or market day...¹⁴⁸

Singing in a harsh, shrill or shrieking vocal quality (as stated in some accounts)¹⁴⁹ was partly done to cut through the noises of people moving about busily and to drown out other happenings around them. The untamed vocal quality can also be explained by the fact that ballad singing was most likely not that individual's exclusive profession.

¹⁴⁵ Neilands, 211.

¹⁴⁶ Zimmermann, 114.

¹⁴⁷ William Allingham, "Irish Ballad Singers and Irish Street Ballads", *Household Worlds* 4, no. 94, (Saturday January 10, 1852), 362.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 366.

¹⁴⁹ Neilands, 215.

In many cases male ballad singers also worked as day labourers depending on whichever profession was more lucrative at the time. The use of other practices that did not focus on the quality of the voice, according to Neilands, were used to compensate for their lack of musical skills¹⁵⁰. In Figure 3.7 a ballad singer and fiddler are shown together.

Figure 3.7¹⁵¹
Fiddler and Singer at a Patron



Not only have they paired together to attract attention but they are also elevated on some kind of platform so that they stand out from the crowd.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 216.

¹⁵¹ W. H. Crawford, "The Patron, or Festival of St. Kevin at the Seven Churches, Glendalough, Couty Wicklow 1813," *Ulster Folklife* (32), 1986, 39.

Another practice designed to gain the attention and patronage of an audience was the pairing or tripling up of singers to create more volume and greater projection. The scene of a group of singers, as opposed to one, acted to create more of a spectacle for an audience.¹⁵² The addition of musical accompaniment through working together with an instrumentalist was another way to intrigue potential patrons. These same ideas, mentioned above, apply to the travelling instrumentalist who also may have paired up with another instrumentalist or even a dancer to add more of a spectacle element. "The tent which harboured the best piper was certain to have the largest patronage, and naturally the most skillful dancers."¹⁵³ This marketing stimulated two senses of their potential audience, sight and hearing.¹⁵⁴

Income of the Ballad Singer

Ballad singers subsisted primarily through the sale of broadside ballads. The sheets of music that they sold were called half-penny ballads¹⁵⁵ because that is the amount for which they were sold. Some printers of broadside ballads paid ballad singers to sell and distribute their sheet music. Mary Teely who, in 1833, received three and a quarter shillings by a man named Kelly who owned a printing shop.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ O'Neill, 220.

¹⁵⁴ Neilands, 217.

¹⁵⁵ Zimmermann, 22.

¹⁵⁶ Murphy, 90.

Denis Sheehan has the top wage of about one pound a week, but his highest earning went up to one pound and five shillings in a single day in 1841.¹⁵⁷ Another specific example is recorded in Kilrush, county Clare where a ballad singer would earn two to three shillings a night. The average earning for the ballad singer in times of political excitement was three shillings a day up to two pounds a week.¹⁵⁸ The income of the ballad singer was in constant flux depending on many factors that will be addressed later.

Requirements of the Ballad Singer

Ballad singers required fewer skills than that of the travelling musician. All he needed was sufficient capital to buy ballads from printers, the ability to read broadside ballads (some just memorised the songs) and to prepare their performance.¹⁵⁹ Denis Sheehan¹⁶⁰ gives the price (on two occasions) for ballads that he used to earn his living.

Table 3.8
The Price of Ballads

Price for Ballads	Quantity of Ballads Bought	Place
Six pence	Three dozen	Thurles, Tipperary
Four Shillings	One pound's worth	Cashel, Tipperary

Since most male ballad singers were single labourers, without a family to support, they had a degree of flexibility with their movement and how they spent their money. Women had a diminished degree of mobility.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ Neilands, 213.

Keeners

Mention of another kind of travelling vocalist is given in Thomas Crofton Croker's¹⁶¹ *Researches in the South of Ireland* (1824). Keeners were involved in wakes and funerals. In his chapter entitled "Keens and Death Ceremonies" Croker makes mention of keeners.

The funeral howls notorious, and although this vociferous expression of grief is on the decline, there is still, in the less civilised parts of the country, a strong attachment to the custom, and many yet be found who are keeners or mourners for the dead by profession.¹⁶²

These women's conducted themselves in a very serious manner with loud distinctive mournful voices. There was little movement in the performance perhaps to avoid diverting the attention from the person who had passed away. Crofton quotes from Dr. O'Brien's Irish dictionary to define the keen.

...a cry for the dead, according to certain loud and mournful notes, and verses, wherein the pedigree, land, property, generosity and good actions of the deceased person, and his ancestors, are diligently and harmoniously recounted, in order to excite pity and compassion in the hearers, and to make them sensible of their great loss in the death of a person whom they lament.¹⁶³

The following is an except taken from Croker on how he learned more about the practice of keening. In this passage he brings up the possible existence of another kind of travelling musician who existed in the first half of the nineteenth century.

¹⁶⁰ Murphy, 88-89.

¹⁶¹ Thomas Crofton Croker (1798-1854) was born in county Cork as the son of an army officer. He was a clerk in the admiralty in London from 1818-50. He travelled extensively throughout the west of Ireland and collected stories and songs (which he sent to Thomas Moore). For more information see **Appendix 2**.

¹⁶² Thomas Crofton Croker, *Researches in the South of Ireland* (London, 1824), introduction by Kevin Danaher (Reprint: Shannon: Irish University Press, 1969), 173.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

Having a curiosity to hear the Keen more distinctly sung than over a corpse, when it is accompanied by a wild and inarticulate uproar as a chorus, I procured an elderly woman, who was renowned for her skill in keening, to recite for me some of these dirges. This woman, whose name was Harrington, led a wandering kind of life, travelling from cottage to cottage about the country, and though in fact subsisting on charity, found every where not merely a welcome, but had numerous invitations, on account of the vast store of Irish verses she had collected, and could repeat.¹⁶⁴

Croker describes her performance of keen songs in the following manner.

...Before she commenced repeating, she mumbled for a short time, probably the beginning of each stanza, to assure herself of the arrangement, with her eyes closed, rocking her body backwards and forwards, as if keeping time to the measure of the verse. She then began in a kind of whining recitative, but as she proceeded and as the composition required it, her voice assumed a variety of deep and fine tones, and the energy with which many passages were delivered, proved her perfect comprehension and strong feeling of the subject, but her eyes always continued shut, perhaps to prevent interruption to her thoughts, or her attention being engaged by any surrounding object.¹⁶⁵

For the sake of completeness I have included keeners as another possible form of travelling musician that was around in the first half of the nineteenth century. Also it seems by the accounts above that this profession may have been dominated by females.

Hedge Schoolmasters

For the most part, the hedge schoolmaster played an intellectual function inside the community which he visited. He too was a itinerant who in his earlier days travelled, as was the case with William Carleton, as a poor scholar (educated by other hedge schoolmasters) and acquired many skills that he passed on to the communities they visited. As the most educated he would handle legal matters and perform other services for the community. His main function was as a teacher to the community children in hedge schools. Hedge schools

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 173-4.

were Catholic schools that were held in makeshift classrooms in a barn or hedge. Because of strict penal laws forbidding the education of children in Catholic schools, there was a need to be secretive.¹⁶⁶ Usually hedge schools¹⁶⁷ were held in conjunction with a school of dance where possible.¹⁶⁸ One account speaks of a chapel under construction being used for musical and other activities.

...In Munster, the village schoolmaster...is the most important personage in the parish. His "academic grove" is a long thatched house, generally the largest in the place; surrendered, when necessary, for the waking of a dead body, or the celebration of mass whilst the chapel is undergoing repairs; and on Sundays, when not otherwise engaged, it is used as a jig or dancing house.¹⁶⁹

The hedge schoolmaster also was known for his skills in music and the composition and performance of songs.¹⁷⁰



The broad term of travelling musician is broken down into the main figures present in nineteenth-century Ireland. With their practices outlined, these professionals need to be placed within the historical circumstances in which they lived.



¹⁶⁶ Breathnach, 50.

¹⁶⁷ One of the most important functions of the hedge school was to teach the children English because they were required to converse with their employer and sign work contract agreements.

¹⁶⁸ Breathnach, 50.

¹⁶⁹ Croker, 326.

¹⁷⁰ For more information on this topic see: Julie Henigan, "For Want of Education": The Origin of the Hedge Schoolmaster Songs", *Ulster Folk Life* 40, (1994): 27-38.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE SOCIAL/ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT OF THE IRISH TRAVELLING MUSICIAN

Getting situated in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century

The intention of this chapter is to outline the background needed to understand the general conditions in which the travelling musician lived. The nineteenth century was a unique time in the history of Ireland. The number of changes that occurred make this one of the most active and complicated times in Ireland's history. Since my focus is on the first half of the nineteenth century up until the time of The Great Potato Famine (1846/7-1849), I eliminate the further complication of this devastating event.

Capitalism, Feudalism or Imperialist Rule?

In many ways Ireland had many elements of all of the above in the first half of the nineteenth century. Due to Ireland's close proximity to England, it had become technologically advanced in its industrial development. East Ulster had an industrial boom from 1745 to 1815.¹

While Ireland had been, during the late eighteenth century and into the nineteenth centuries, more technologically advanced and economically efficient than England (in several respects), there was a considerable part of the land that remained 'backward'. By 'backward' I refer to the rural peasantry's use of old methods to make their means of subsistence. While England and Scotland kept up with technological advances, the Irish stuck with traditional

¹ J.W. O'Hagan ed., *The Economy of Ireland: Policy and Performance of a Small European Country* (London: MacMillan Press Ltd., 1995), 5.

methods of previous generations. The average Irishman did not have access to the most modern tools and techniques because there was insufficient capital available.

The feudal aspect of early nineteenth-century Irish society can be traced back to Ireland's pre-colonial days when they were socially organised into chiefdoms. Chiefdoms consisted of large tracts of land including a big homestead (Big Houses) where the chieftain (or regional king) and his family resided. The system of succession was dynastic and organised with the chieftain ruling over territories and claiming an overlordship over those on their land.² The peasantry class lived on the chieftain's land.

Henry VIII was proclaimed the King of Ireland in 1541 and in the second half of the sixteenth century he initiated the confiscation of land that was slowly reassigned to landlords. These landlords were mostly English and some Scottish Protestants. This process of land confiscation occurred over a period of approximately two centuries. With the presence of the English in plantations, the Penal Codes (1692-1829) and other laws, the imperialist aspects of Ireland's social structure cannot be ignored. The relationship between the mother country and its colony ensured that England had definite power that impacted the way the Irish and its elite lived.

The Growth and Decline of Industry

There was an industrial boom in Ireland from about 1745 to 1815 (at this time we also see a significant increase in Ireland's population). While the eastern and especially the northern regions of Ireland were developed into major cities (Belfast and Dublin), the rest of

² Donal O'Sullivan, *Carolan: The Life and Times and Music of an Irish Harper*, Vol. 1 (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Limited, 1958), 3.

Ireland participated in the industrial boom through the cottage industry. In the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, there were various jobs available in cotton and linen factories that employed many labourers to work in the factories, on their own farmland or in their homes throughout the country, **Figure 4.1** shows an image of workers at home.

Figure 4.1³
Cottage Industry Workers at Home



³ Johanathan Bell, *People and the Land* (Belfast: Friar's Bush Press, 1992), 76

By the end of the eighteenth century, Ireland's linen export industry (based in Ulster)⁴ was one of the world's leading producers. Ireland was seen as a viable competitor to England's industry by the last half of the eighteenth century. The advantage came to Ireland because of its cheap labour force, low tariffs and because flax was home grown which eliminating the need to import. The linen cottage industry was the main source of employment for the Irish population leading up and into the nineteenth century. Although the industry was based in Ulster, it employed those as far away as county Kerry to grow, spin and weave flax on their own property and within their homesteads.⁵ The following table indicates the extreme rate of growth of this industry in the eighteenth century.

Table 4.1
Growth of Linen Export Industry in Ireland⁶

Year	1712	1760	1796
Linen Exported (in Million Yards)	1.5	17	46

The increase in this industry produced a corresponding demand for an increased number of weavers⁷ and other labourers throughout the country. Since production was based on demand, and Ireland had the cheapest production cost at the time, Ireland's linen industry

⁴ The famous linen triangle was between Dungannon, Lisburn and Armagh and prosperous agricultural production (yarns, oats, potatoes, turf) took place in the surrounding areas. (Kevin Whelan, "The Modern Landscape: from plantation to present", in *Atlas of the Irish Rural Landscape*, edited by F. H. A. Aalen, Kevin Whelan and Matthew Stout (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 76.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Aalen, 76.

⁷ By 1770 there were 42,000 weavers in Ulster alone. At the height of proto-industrialisation in 1820 there were 70,000 weavers. (Whelan, 77)

was expanded to maximise profits. Ireland's other main exports include beef, sheep and grain. For the most part the export industry catered to the needs of the English population.

Proletarianisation

The result of the expansion of the linen industry was a partial proletarianisation of the Irish peasantry population especially in Ulster.⁸ The integration of the peasantry class into a capitalist mode of production proved to have irreversible consequences. Once this population became dependent on wages paid by others to compensate for their labour, the means of production was not in their hands. After being involved in a capitalist system it became almost impossible to have a degree of self-reliance. Farmers had to engage in the capitalist system in one way or another either as a labourer or by engaging in the buying and selling of commodities.

Technology

Technology played a major role in the development of industrialisation and the eventual de-industrialisation of Ireland's production. While an industrial boom took place in Ireland, the technology used remained very basic. Hand looms and spinning wheels were the main tools in use (which required a capital investment of the labourer)⁹ but these machines were dependent on the individual operator's labour to determine the rate of production. Innovations in machinery that were developed performed at a higher rate and

⁸ Liam Kennedy and Phillip Ollerenshaw eds., *An Economic History of Ulster, 1820-1940* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985), 2.

as a consequence many jobs were eliminated. The new power driven machinery involved a substantial amount of capital to be invested and kept in a fixed place, like a factory (not in the homes of the peasantry). To keep up with the market, English and Scottish manufacturers bought new machinery as it was developed in the 1830s. In Ireland, however, there were only a few mills in Belfast that could compete.¹⁰ The consequence was the demise of the linen cottage industry by the 1840s, and the de-industrialisation of Ireland. Those previously employed in the cottage industry had to fall back on farming or seasonal work while others resorted to permanent emigration to another country.¹¹

Ireland's Agricultural and Livestock Scene

For the first half of the nineteenth century, farmers focused on such tillage crops as oats, potatoes and flax.¹² Not only were these products in demand, but their market price was high and Ireland certainly had favourable conditions for the production of these crops. Potatoes were especially popular because they required little land for a high yielding crop.

Introduced to Ireland in the early eighteenth century, the potato quickly became the main dietary staple of most of the peasant population illustrated in **Figure 4.2**, Potato Consumption in 1836.

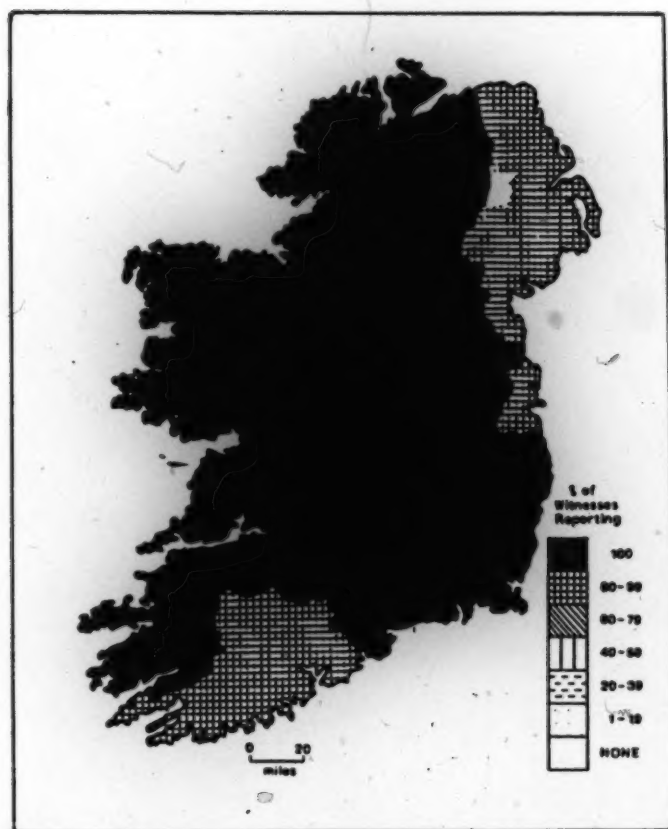
⁹ The labourer was required to either purchase or rent the necessary equipment.

¹⁰ Ibid., 4.

¹¹ Ibid., 5.

¹² Ibid., 48.

Figure 4.2¹³
Potato Consumption in 1836



The potato was the most economical and efficient way to produce one's own subsistence. Potatoes required no processing (they were ready to boil and eat) which allowed the producer to have a degree of control over his means for survival.¹⁴

¹³ L.A. Clarkson and E. Margaret Crawford, "Dietary Directions: A Topographical Survey of Irish Diet, 1836" in *Economy and Society in Scotland and Ireland 1500-1939*, edited by Rosalind Mitchison and Peter Roebuck (Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers Ltd., 1988), 175.

¹⁴ Aalen, 85.

Whether one could engage in the growing of agricultural crops depended on the quality and quantity of the land as well as the climate. Figure 4.3 details the ratios of different farm sizes by county in 1841.

Figure 4.3¹⁵
Farm Size by County

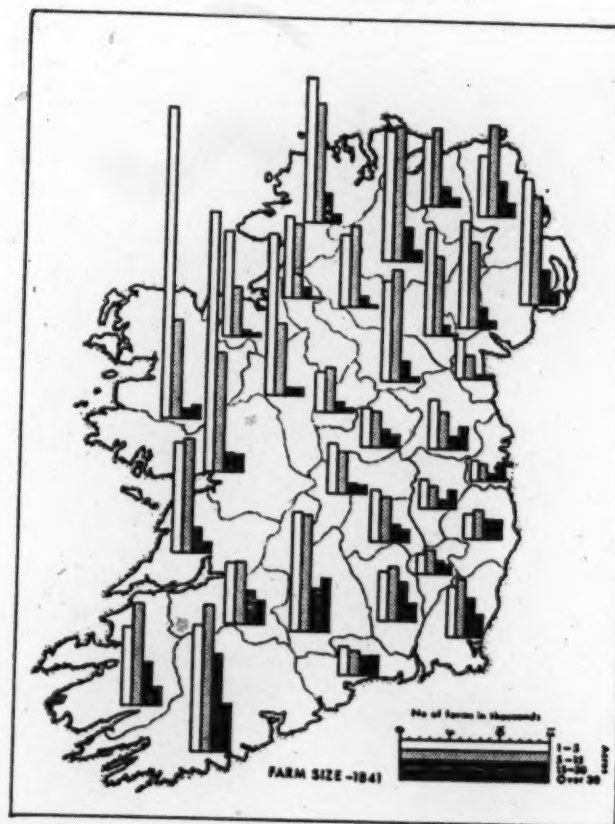


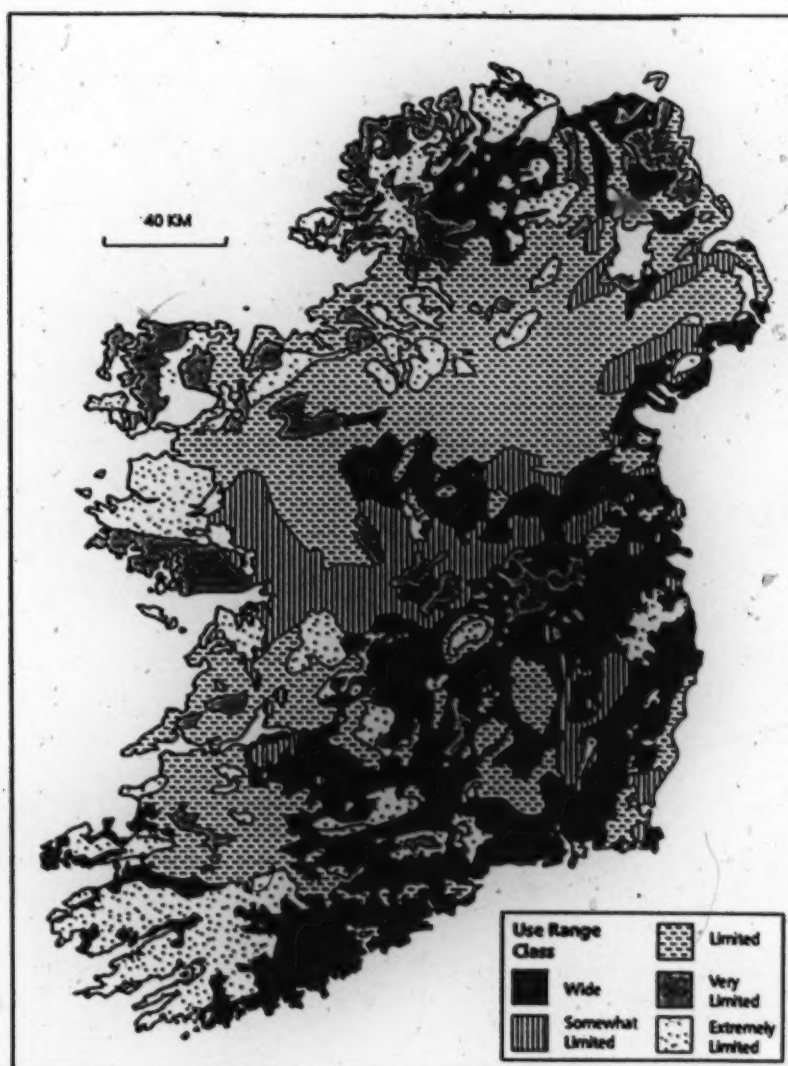
Figure 4.4¹⁶ illustrates the land use capability of 1979. Although this map is well outside my scope I believe that the general qualities are representative of the first half of the nineteenth

¹⁵ Gearoid Ó Tuathaigh, *Ireland Before the Famine 1798-1848* (Dublin: Gill and MacMillan Ltd., 1972), 131.

¹⁶ James H. Johnson, *The Human Geography of Ireland* (Toronto: John Wiley & Sons, 1994), 21.

century. The lower half of eastern Ireland had the best quality of land while most of western and northern Ireland had a limited land use capability.

Figure 4.4¹⁷
Land Use Capability (1979)



¹⁷ Ibid., 21.

The presence of a significant holding of livestock required more land to allow for the grazing of animals such as cows and sheep. Graziers¹⁸ in the first half of the nineteenth century, were large property owners who began to use their land as a commercialised operation for agricultural or livestock production. Although the peasant did not have a lot of land, usually between one to fifteen acres, the raising of pigs was an integral part of their economy.¹⁹ In the west the trade or selling of livestock, such as pigs, sheep and cattle in county fairs, was important to the survival of many people. Like in industry, technological advances forced many rural labourers out of work. **Figure 4.5** shows the general layout of Ireland before the eighteenth century according to tillage, livestock and industry.

The areas marked "small farm", located in the West, were poor areas with limited land use capability that made the production of potatoes one of their only options. "Cattle fattening" areas and "dairying" required more land to allow for the raising of animals. Thus the owners (usually graziers) had to have large properties. In the south-east of Ireland, tillage was popular because of the quality of land. This area was for commercial production and took place on large tracts of land. Finally the industrial production of linen and cotton centred in the extreme north-east part of Ireland.

¹⁸ Graziers (later also called ranchers) were members of the middle-class that had a significant amount of land that was used for commercial agricultural or livestock production.

¹⁹ Kennedy, 17.

Figure 4.5²⁰
Pre-Famine Settlement Regions



²⁰ Aalen, 70.

Population

The statistical information offered here basically outlines the population growth and decline from 1600 to 1850.²¹

Table 4.2
Population Figures for Ireland from 1600 to 1850²²

Year	1600	1753	1791	1821	1831	1841	1850
Population (millions)	1.0	2.5	4.8	6.8	7.8	8.2	6.6

Ireland's population increases and decreases took place primarily in the peasantry class. The intensification of agricultural production²³ and the expansion of industrialisation were two major reasons for the increase in the population. The subdivision of land increased the availability of land for workers, which provided cheap labour demanded in Ireland's cottage industry. Land and the ample supply of food (through potato crops) no doubt provided Ireland's population the means to marry at an early age and to have high fertility rates at the end of the eighteenth and into the nineteenth century.²⁴ The means necessary for life involved very little, as the Irish proverb goes "If we had potatoes and turf,

²¹ These are some basic figures about the population growth of Ireland into the nineteenth century. One should note that dependant on the source used and that source's method of collection, these figures will vary.

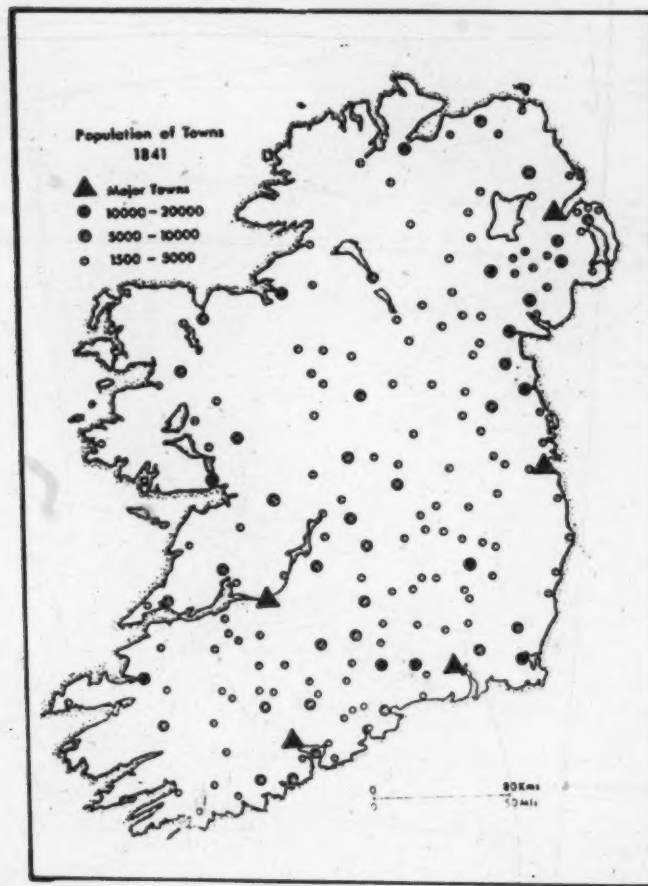
²² Ó Tuathaigh, 129, 137 and O'Hagan, 4, 10, 19.

²³ Aalen, 77.

²⁴ Cormac Ó Gráda, "Poverty, population, and agriculture, 1801-45, In *A New History of Ireland, Vol. V: Ireland Under the Union, I*, edited by W. E. Vaughan (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 118.

we could take life easy.”²⁵ The land tenure system also played a role in directly impacted the population growth.

Figure 4.6²⁵
Size and Placement of Urban Centres (1841)



The majority of Ireland's population lived in rural areas. In the 1840s there were approximately eight million people in Ireland. **Figure 4.6** clearly indicates that in 1841 there were only five significant urban centres (of over 20,000 people) throughout Ireland.

²⁵ Aalen, 82.

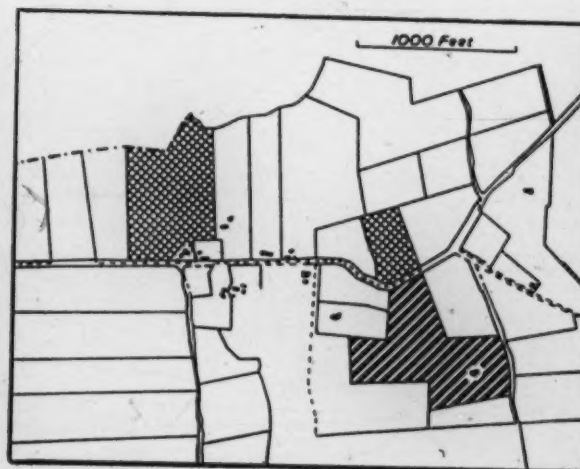
Certainly there were some fundamental differences between the communities found in rural areas as opposed to the living structure of urban areas. A social structure common in rural living was called *rundale*²⁷ (some communities were still based on this system into the late part of the nineteenth century). One main feature of *rundale* was the clustering of houses together (*clachán*) to offer a physical closeness to the community. By the nineteenth century there were changes to this system that incorporate landlords. **Figure 4.7a**, taken from Johnson's *The Human Geography of Ireland* (1994), is an example of the *rundale* system. A clear example of how the land was divided and distributed to those within the community is seen here along with the way the houses were grouped together. In **Figure 4.7b** this same land is shown consolidated in 1909.

Figure 4.7(a,b)²⁸
Land Before and After Consolidation

a) Land (Cloonkeen, Mayo) Before Consolidation



b) Land After Consolidation (1909)



²⁶ Ó Tuathaigh, 131.

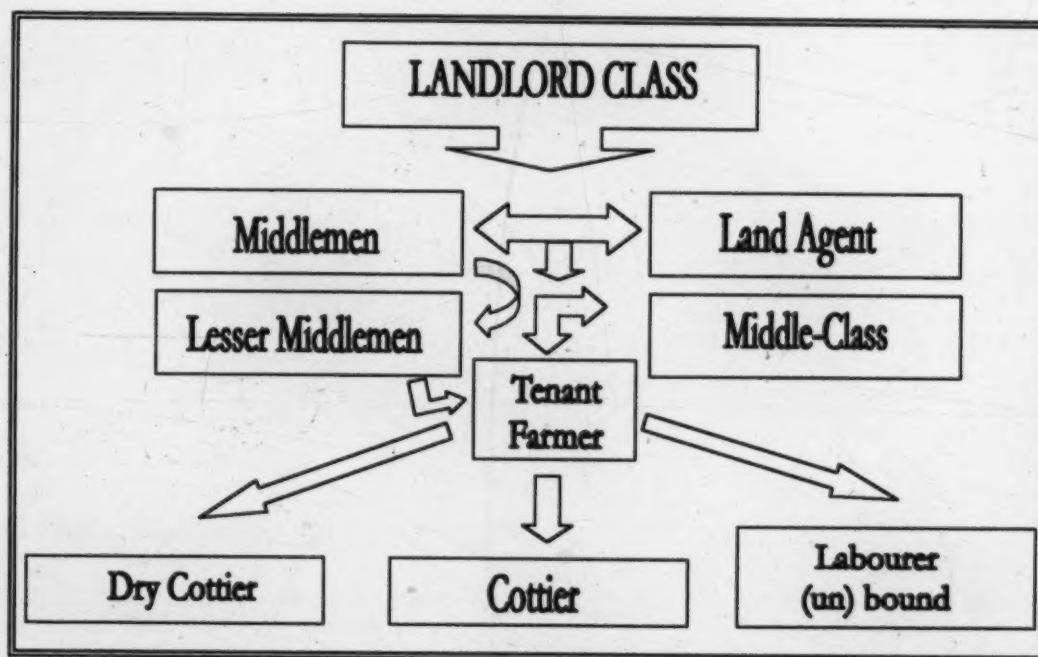
²⁷ See Glossary "Rundale" and "Clachán".

²⁸ Johnson, 47 and 57.

Land Tenure and Class System

One can not speak of the land tenure system (of the first part of the nineteenth century) without also talking about the class system in Ireland. Understanding the land tenure and class system will help the reader to get a sense of the societal structure and the power relations in operation. **Figure 4.8** is a simple illustration of this system. The classes will be explained below but, for the sake of convenience, they will also be summarised in the **Glossary**.

Figure 4.8
Land Tenure and Class Structure



At the top of this class hierarchy, is the **landlord** or **landowner class**. For the most part this class did not reside in Ireland. Owned by the nobility or the lesser gentry²⁹, their

²⁹ Kennedy, 31.

estates ranged from 10,000 to 100,000 acres. By the early nineteenth century about ninety percent of the landowners were Protestants with English or Scottish roots.

Since many of the landlords were absentees, the majority of them made use of **middlemen** or **intermediate landlords** to deal with their property. Middlemen were responsible for the payment of a set fee to the landowner and for this they were given control over the land to rent out as they pleased. These men usually lived on the property and divided the land for different tenants or other lesser middlemen at a rent in which the middlemen would make a large profit. The land holdings rented out, varied in size. Some were large tracts of land for the middle-class and smaller tracts of land were rented out to smaller farmers. The middlemen, again, were mostly Protestant being, in some cases, the sons of the gentry and yeomen.³⁰

Also occurring in the first part of the nineteenth century was the eventual elimination of middlemen with the use of land agents. **Land agents** worked directly for the landowner and were responsible for the collection of the rents of the tenants.

The **middle-class** were influential and distinguished residents of Ireland. Protestant or Catholic, this class emerged in the eighteenth century. These men usually owned fairly large tracts of land where they raised livestock or produced agricultural products.

What follows are tenants in this system that are classified as the rural peasantry class. They made up the bulk of Ireland's population and generally lived slightly above or just at subsistence level.

The **small farmer** (or **tenant farmer**) were also addressed as **dwarf** or **peasant landlords** this term serves to describe the parallel with the landlord as a microcosm of the

³⁰ One of a class of freeholders (see **Glossary**), below the gentry, who cultivated their own land.

land tenure and class system. Their average landholding was ten acres, which they used to farm for their own means of subsistence, housing any labourers required for the farmer's agricultural pursuits and, in many cases, sublet to other tenants.

The main tenant of the small farmer was the **cottier**. The cottier rented land from the landowner or the small farmer. He had a cottage and land for the rental price, which may have included employment as an agricultural labourer for the farmer. Especially at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the cottier was likely to be employed as a weaver or spinner (these workers were spread throughout Ireland in the first part of the nineteenth century).

The **dry cottier** only had a cottage and needed to rent a separate small patch of land called a *con acre* to grow crops like potatoes and oats for himself and his family's consumption. Employment for these workers was also found in the linen or cotton cottage industry.

Labourers are the last types of tenants found on the land. There were bound and unbound labourers. **Bound labourers** were engaged for a season of work on a farmer's land. They were provided with a cabin and paid with the provision of food or land to grow his own crops. The **unbound labourer** was employed on a casual basis to work on a farm. He, like the dry cottier, was provided with a *con acre*.

The above outline of the land tenure and class system of early nineteenth century certainly does not cover all those present and active within Irish society but it lays out a firm foundation for rural Ireland from which I will build upon.

Farm Size

The following table is taken from *A New History of Ireland*, Volume V from the article entitled "Poverty, population, and agriculture, 1801-45" by Cormac Ó Gráda.

Table 4.3
The Size of Farms and the Share of Land³¹

Class	Size of Farm (acres)	Numbers	Total land held (millions of acres)	Percentage of total land held
I landlords		10,000	3.5	17.5
Farmers:				
II rich	80	50,000	4.0	20
III comfortable	50	100,000	5.0	25
IV 'family'	20	250,000	5.0	25
V poor peasants	5	300,000	1.5	7.5
VI labourers, etc.	1	1,000,000	1.0	5

The last two classes are dependent wholly or in part on seasonal migration.³²

Ó Tuathaigh provides a visual depiction of the sizes of farms throughout Ireland in 1841 (reproduced in **Figure 4.3** (page 102)). The following table is given in Ó Tuathaigh's *Ireland before the Famine 1798-1848*. Land holdings are divided differently than above but they are both based on 1841 statistics.

³¹ Ó Gráda, 114.

³² Ibid., 115.

Table 4.4
Land Holdings in 1841³³

Holdings	1841	Per Cent
1-5 acres	310,436	44.9
5-15 acres	252,799	36.6
15-30 acres	79,342	11.0
Above 30 acres	48,625	7.0

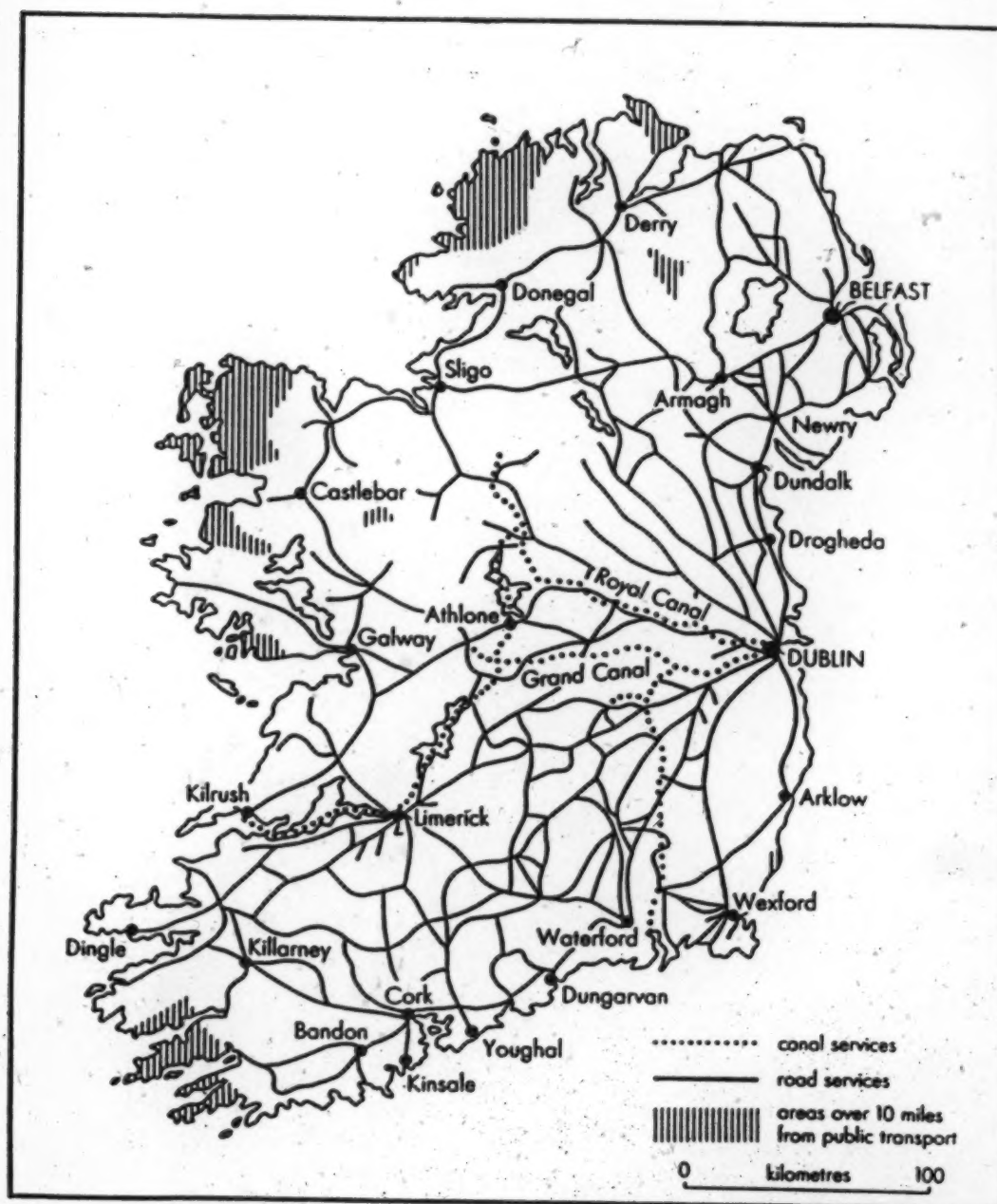
Mobility (Forms of Transportation) and Migration

As the nineteenth century progressed, Irish society became increasingly mobile. Developments in transportation (railway, canals, roads, etc.) enabled the rural peasantry to travel easily and cheaply to obtain work. In the early part of the nineteenth century there was a great deal of variance in the degree of mobility in the peasantry population. Mobility depended on certain factors which include: the available capital to afford transportation, the degree of education of the individual (this will be addressed below) and other factors such as age.³⁴ Figure 4.9 through 4.11 show the transportation routes available and the ones that were used for internal trade.

³³ Ó Tuathaigh, 206.

³⁴ For more information on this topic, see Robin Haines and others, "Migration and Opportunity: An Antipodean Perspective", *International Review of Social History* 43, (1998): 235-363; James H. Johnson, "The Distribution of Irish Emigration in the Decade Before the Great Famine", *Irish Geography* 21, part 2, (1988): 78-87; Stephen Nicholas and Peter R. Shergold, "Irish Intercounty Mobility Before 1840", *Irish Economic and Social History* 17, (1990): 22-43.

Figure 4.9³⁵
Canal and Road Service in Ireland (c. 1841)



³⁵ T. W. Freeman, "Irish Town in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries," in *The Development of the Irish Town*, edited by R. A. Butlin (London: Towman and Littlefield, 1977), 131.

Figure 4.10³⁶
Roadways in Ireland (1837)



³⁶ Ibid., 125.

Figure 4.11³⁷
Inland Trade in Ireland (1836)

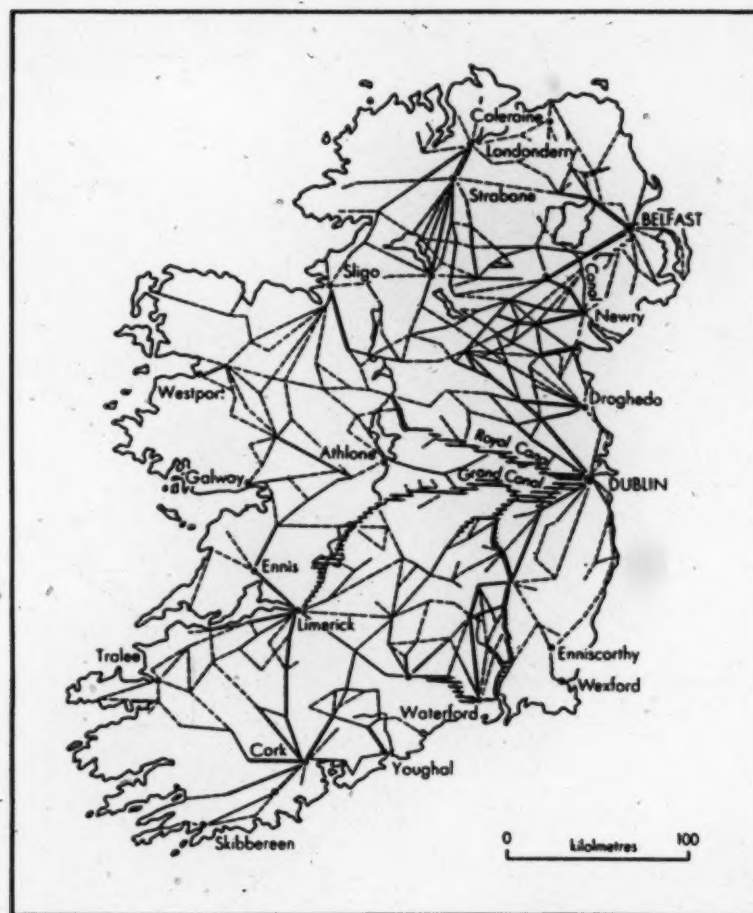


Figure 4.9 in addition to showing the canal and road services in Ireland in 1841, also marks out the areas with limited access to public transport. Deirdre M. Mageean's article "Emigration from Irish Ports"³⁸ offers valuable information on the forms of transportation

³⁷ Ibid., 110.

³⁸ Deirdre M. Mageean, "Emigration from Irish Ports", *Journal of American Ethnic History* (13), (fall 1993): 6-30.

available for not only permanent migration outside of the country, but also migration within Ireland. Mail boats, in order to subsidise their costs, often carried passengers from either large or smaller ports in Ireland.³⁹

Seasonal Migration

Seasonal migration was a form of labour that could be life long for the general labourer. By 1830, 57,000 annual migrants per year⁴⁰ were travelling in Ireland for the purpose of temporary work or permanent migration. The forms of transportation really catered to the migrating population of the market. The railroad system and trains both led to major and minor ports arriving conveniently in accordance with the sailing schedules⁴¹ (complying with demand).

There are two forms of seasonal migrants; those that travelled within Ireland and those that went to England or Scotland for work.⁴² There is a record of 60,000 migrant workers passing through Irish ports in 1841⁴³. Migrant labour was essential for the subsistence of labourers and their families.⁴⁴ Although Ireland had a low percentage of

³⁹ Ibid., 14.

⁴⁰ James H. Johnson, "Harvest Migration for Nineteenth-Century Ireland", *Transactions of British Geographers* (41), 1967, 97; quoted in Mageean, 16.

⁴¹ Mageean, 24.

⁴² J. Connolly, "Seasonal Migration", in *The Oxford Companion to Irish History*, ed. J. Connolly (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 504.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

permanent migration to different parts of the country (five percent),⁴⁵ there was a lot of movement between counties for the attainment of seasonal work.

Stephen Nicholas and Peter R. Shergold's article "Irish Intercounty Mobility before 1840" provides very useful information on the migratory pattern of the Irish peasantry within Ireland. Their data is based on convict records of 6,035 Irish men and women (with 3,994 of those records having completed figures). It is established in the article that the statistical data is representative of the Irish population since almost all the convicts were first offenders for petty crimes⁴⁶. The results of the examination indicate that just over one third of this sample either migrated internally or emigrated before 1840.

According to the **Table 4.5**, taken from the Nicholas and Shergold article, the average distance travelled was forty-two miles, which gave the migrant a choice of up to five counties.⁴⁷ Sixty-one percent of migrants moved more than one county over with Dublin attracting nineteen percent of this population.⁴⁸ These moves were based on the availability of jobs in agriculture and better employment opportunities in urban areas. The majority (eighty-one percent)⁴⁹ of those that became mobile were from rural areas.

⁴⁵ T.M. Devine and David Dickson, "In Pursuit of Comparative Aspects of Irish and Scottish Development: A Review of the Symposium", in *Ireland and Scotland 1600-1850*, edited by T. M. Devine and David Dickson (Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers Ltd., 1983), 269.

⁴⁶ Stephen Nicholas and Peter R. Shergold, "Irish Intercounty Mobility before 1840", *Irish Economic and Social History* 17, (1990), 26.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 27.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 28.

Table 4.5
Distance Moved by Migrants within Ireland, circa 1800-1837⁵⁰

Distance Moved in Miles	Frequency Distribution in Percent
10-19	9.2
20-24	3.2
25-29	13.4
30-34	8.0
35-39	2.9
40-44	10.7
45-49	8.3
50-54	3.3
55-59	4.8
60-69	8.7
70-79	4.9
80-89	6.3
90-109	6.9
110-134	5.2
135+	4.2

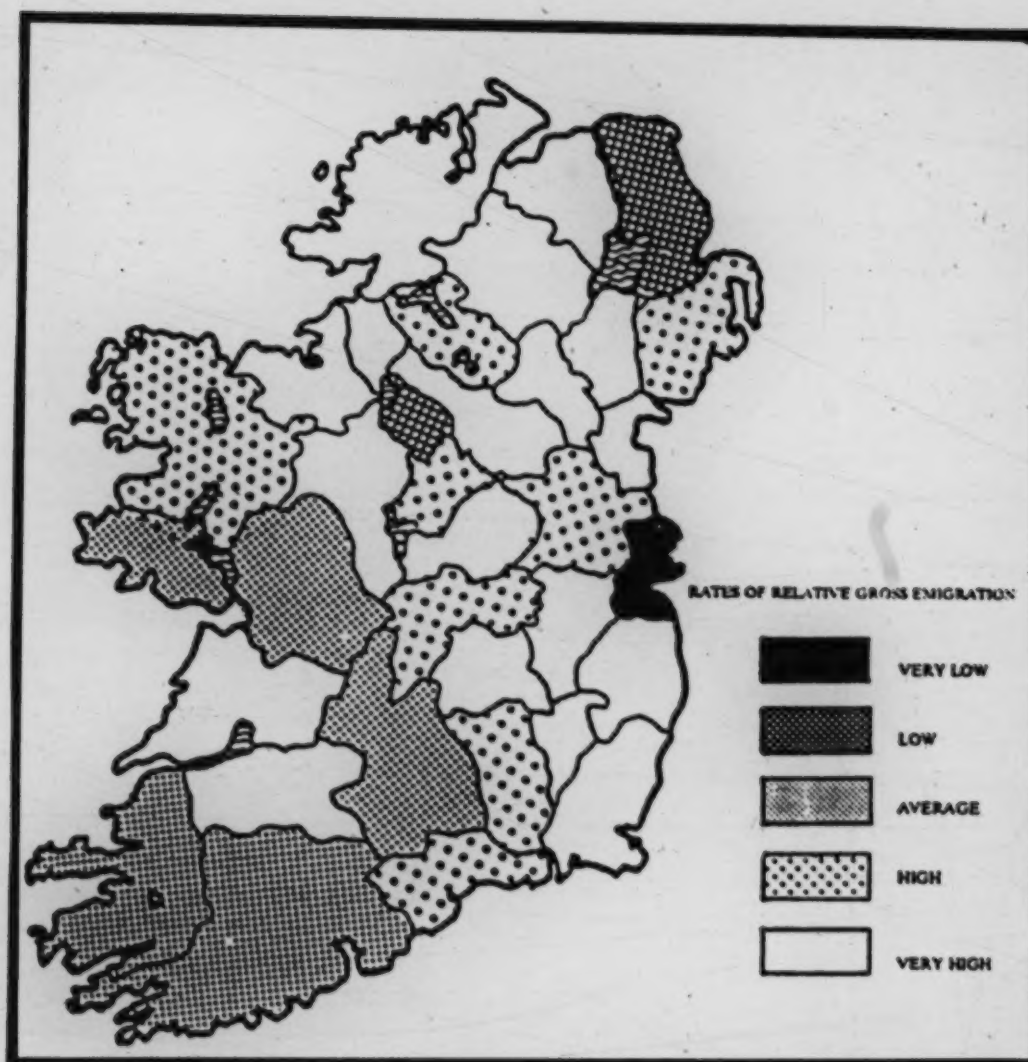
The more skilled the worker, the more mobile he became. With skill came a degree of knowledge including literacy and greater adapting skills. Those that were married tended not to be as mobile because of the cost associated with the relocation of the couple and their family.⁵¹

I include the two maps given in Nicholas and Shergold's article as **Figure 4.12** and **4.13**. **Figure 4.12** shows the rates of relative gross emigration by county while **Figure 4.13** depicts the net gain or loss of migrants by county.

⁵⁰ Nicholas, 28.

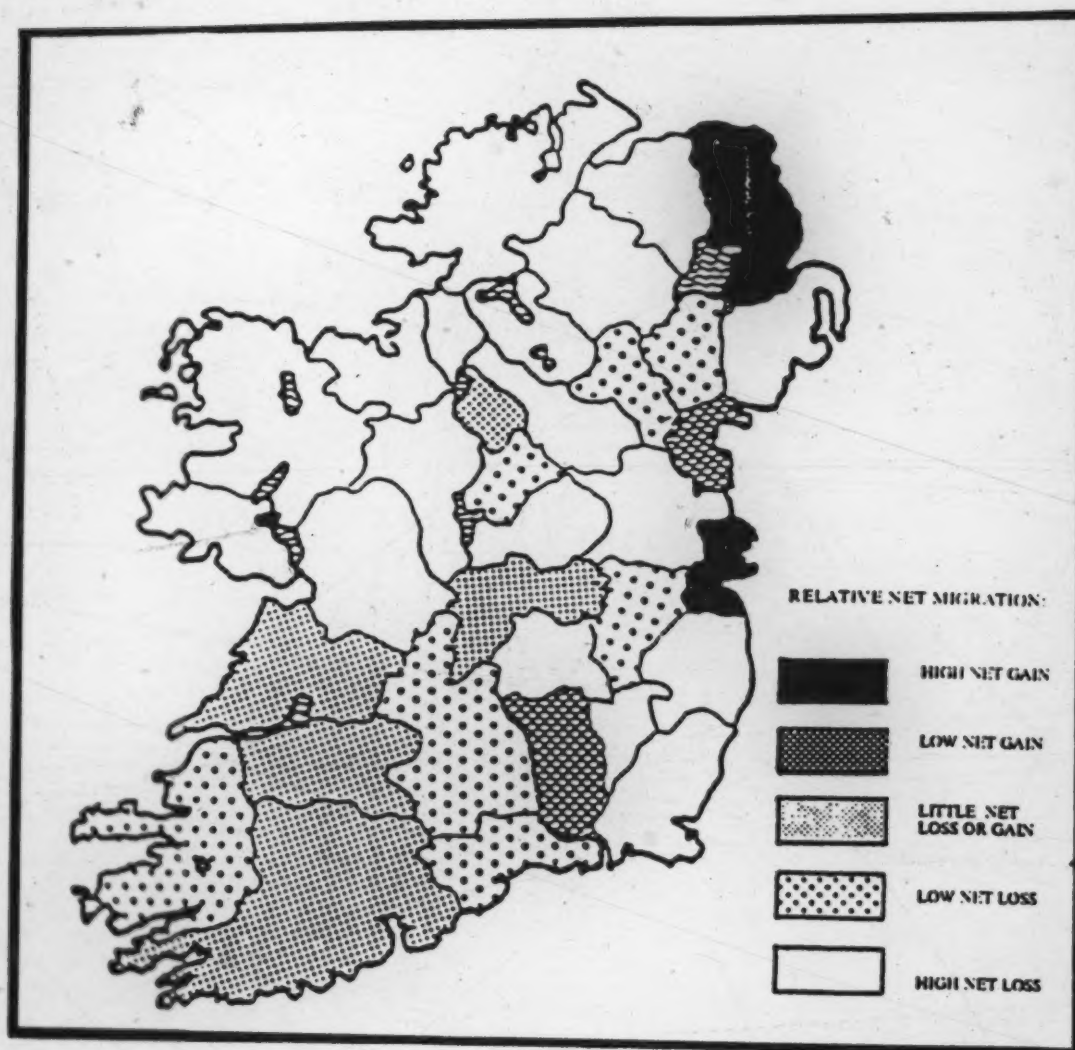
⁵¹ Ibid., 32.

Figure 4.12⁵²
Relative Gross Emigration by County (1817-1839)



⁵² Ibid., 41.

Figure 4.13⁵³
Relative Net Migration by County (1817-1839)



⁵³ Ibid., 42.

The following table offers solid data that can then be mapped onto the above figures.

Table 4.6
Major Irish Intercounty Migration Routes⁵⁴

Distance (miles)	Percentage of Movers	Main Routes (from—to)	Percentage of distance moved from total of migrants
	9	Kildare—Dublin	44
	15	Meath—Dublin	26
		Dublin—Wicklow	17
		Limerick—Tipperary	8
	7	Antrim—Armagh	17
	11	Armagh—Down	13
		Dublin—Westmeath	14
		Dublin—Louth	14
		Dublin—Queens	11
		Armagh—Tyrone	8
	8	Dublin—Kings	18
TOTAL	50		

Figure 4.14 demonstrates the above information geographically.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 40.

Figure 4.14⁵⁵
Major Migratory Routes of Convicts (1817-1839)



Education

Many scholars have documented that the more educated the person, the more likely that person was to migrate or emigrate greater distances. In Robin Haines, et. al. article "Migration and Opportunity: An Antipodean Perspective", the authors contends that there

⁵⁵ Ibid.

was an "Irish 'brain drain'" to countries like Australia.⁵⁶ The other main countries that gained a significant Irish immigrant population were England, the United States, Canada and Scotland.

Literacy

Before the nineteenth century, the peasantry class did not have much use for the skills of reading or writing. Family and community members passed down Irish culture and knowledge through the generations. By the end of the eighteenth century, however, literacy became increasingly important because of the regularity and greater frequency of market transactions.⁵⁷ In order to educate the young, the community hired the services of the schoolmaster to teach their children the survival skills that they needed (which the older generation could not pass down). **Table 4.7** (from Ó Ciosáin's *Print and Popular Culture in Ireland, 1750-1850*) shows the degree of literacy depended on age, gender and county (or Province). The table also indicates whether the literacy figure refers to reading or writing ability.

⁵⁶ Robin Haines, Margrette Kleining, Deborah Oxley and Eric Richards, "Migration and Opportunity: An Antipodean Perspective", *International Review of Social History* 43, (1998), 239.

⁵⁷ Niall Ó Ciosáin, *Print and Popular Culture in Ireland, 1750-1850* (New York: St. Martin's Press, Inc., 1997), 27.

Table 4.7
Literacy by Age, Gender and Location (1841) (Ability in Percent)⁵⁸

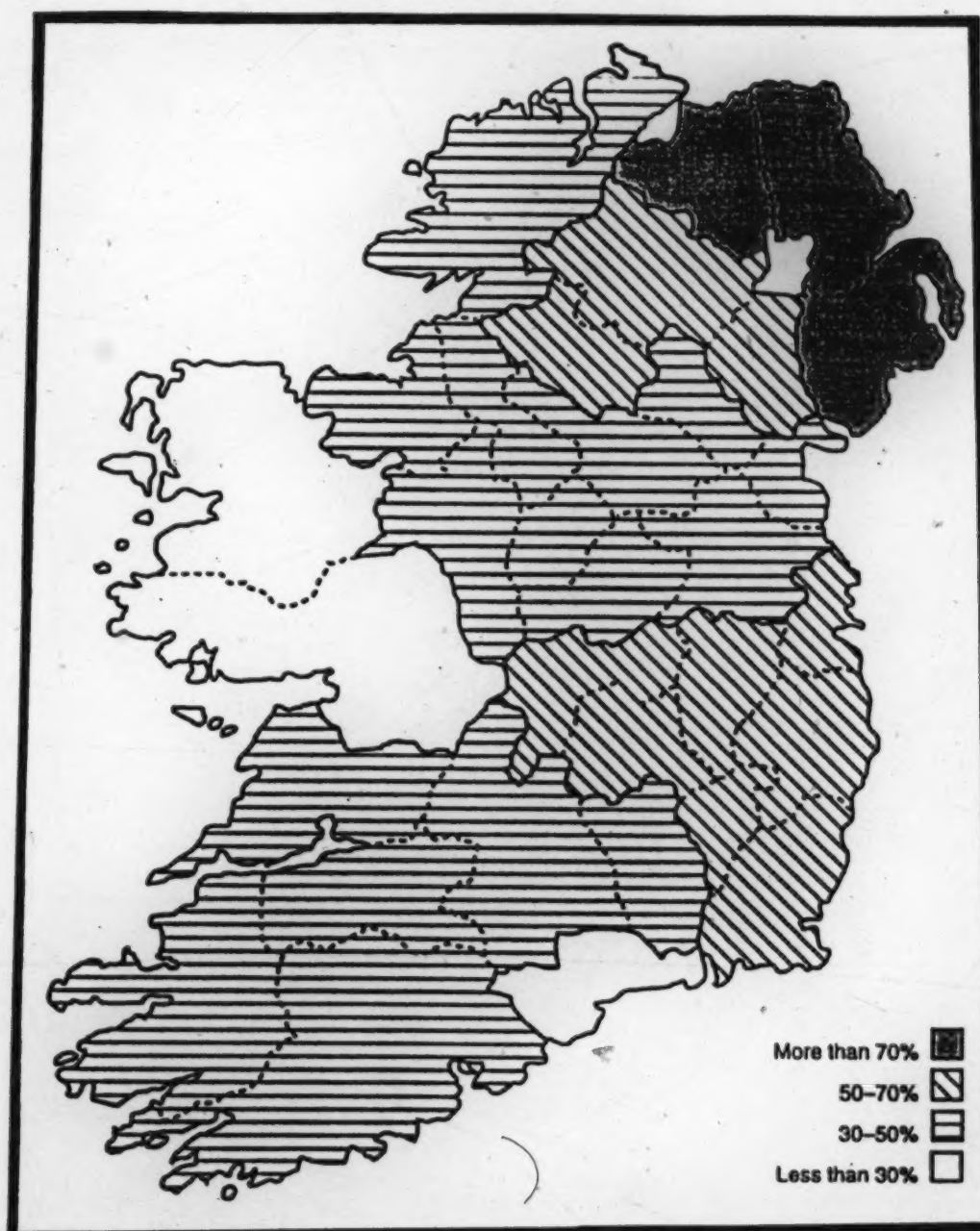
Location	Gender	Ability	Age							
			11-15	16-25	26-35	36-45	46-55	56-65	66-75	75-85
Antrim (county)	Male	Read/Write	42	61	64	65	63	63	60	58
		Read Only	40	27	24	22	23	22	24	25
	Female	Read/Write	27	36	31	28	26	22	23	19
		Read Only	53	48	50	51	51	51	51	50
Down (county)	Male	Read/Write	44	63	66	65	63	61	62	58
		Read Only	35	23	20	19	20	20	20	22
	Female	Read/Write	28	38	33	30	28	24	24	19
		Read Only	46	42	43	43	42	43	45	46
Derry (county)	Male	Read/Write	38	57	58	55	53	50	49	47
		Read Only	42	29	25	26	24	25	27	23
	Female	Read/Write	24	30	23	20	17	15	13	12
		Read Only	53	50	50	48	46	45	47	47
Leinster (Province)	Male	Read/Write	40	53	54	53	50	48	46	43
		Read Only	23	21	19	17	15	14	13	12
	Female	Read/Write	29	36	30	27	24	21	22	20
		Read Only	29	31	29	25	21	17	16	13
Munster (Province)	Male	Read/Write	37	46	43	43	41	36	39	34
		Read Only	17	13	10	9	7	7	6	5
	Female	Read/Write	23	26	18	17	14	11	13	10
		Read Only	19	18	15	12	10	7	7	6

The counties in Antrim, Down and Derry are all in the province of Ulster which has a higher percentage of Protestant population who tended to have more education not only because of their relative wealth but the school system in Ireland only allowed for the education of Protestants until 1829. **Figure 4.15** graphically displays the reading ability of the Irish in 1841. If this map is compared to **Figure 4.16**, which shows the distribution of the English and Scottish population in 1660, the high literacy rate in counties Derry, Antrim and Down can be explained. By 1831 state supported schools were instituted for Catholic children.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ Ibid., 35.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 39.

Figure 4.15⁶⁰
Reading Ability in Ireland (1841)



⁶⁰ Ó Ciosáin, 34.

Figure 4.16⁶¹
English and Scottish Settlements in 1660



⁶¹ Aalen, 25.

Strategies of Survival

In the early part of the nineteenth century labourers took to supplementing their income through the linen cottage industry. Entering into a semi-proletarian status, these workers entered into capitalist social relations, in order to earn the cash rent required of them from the landlord/middleman system. The work of spinning or weaving yarn, growing flax, or other task for the cottage industry was incorporated into the homes of families making use of the whole family at times. In **Figure 4.1** (page 97) a small cottage is shown with the devices used for weaving and spinning yarn worked by a family. While the money earned from this employment was usually used to pay rent, the family still needed a farm to produce their own food to live on. As a last resort to supplement the income of the family, wives and sometimes the children were sent out to beg.⁶²

According to John W. Boyle's chapter "A Marginal Figure: The Irish Rural Laborer,"⁶³ workers came to Britain in search of a "less overstocked labor market."⁶⁴ While Mageean, in her article, articulates the point that those who often migrated were from the poorest part of Ireland (counties Donegal through Mayo), she also states that this population was the least likely to emigrate.⁶⁵ Seasonal migration was a way of life in this area making it

⁶² Kennedy, 26.

⁶³ John W. Boyle, "A Marginal Figure: The Irish Rural Laborer" in *Irish Peasants: Violence and Political Unrest, 1780-1914*, edited by Samuel Clark and James S. Donnelly Jr. (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1983): 311-338.

⁶⁴ Ibid, 319.

⁶⁵ Mageean, 16.

possible for the poorest peasantry with the smallest farms (Figure 4.3 (page 102)) and "inferior soil"⁶⁶ (see Figure 4.4 (page 103)) able to survive.

Income

Ireland's national income for 1840 was approximately £80 million but only ten to fifteen percent of that belonged to forty percent of the population.⁶⁷ The average landless labourer and his family (with an average of five members) earned £15 to £20 per year, where as a Dublin surgeon earned an average of £5,000 per year.⁶⁸

The Presence of Money in the Exchange System

Only a small part of the exchange system involved the use of physical currency. The following table is taken from *An Economic History of Ulster 1820-1939*.

Table 4.8
Forms of Payment for Labour in Ulster, c. 1834⁶⁹

	Money Only (%)	Mainly Money (%)	Mixed Payment (kind and some cash) (%)	Total (%)	Number of witness accounts
Inner Ulster	17	41	42	100	182
Outer Ulster	9	44	47	100	140
Ulster	13	43	44	100	322

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ó Gráda, 113.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ This table is based on the evidence of 322 witnesses. (Kennedy, 34)

According to Edward Wakefield's chapter entitled "The Present State of Money and Circulating Medium" in *An Account of Ireland, Statistical and Political*, Ulster had more circulating money because of its developed industrialised state.

I have reason to believe that payments by tally are much more general in Ireland than is to be concluded from the evidence which I procured...In the grazing counties it forms the entire mode of transfer among the common people; it prevails throughout Connaught, and a great part of Munster.

In a country where the people are little accustomed to the use of any symbol in their transfers, the inhabitants of towns can issue currency of any kind; at first, perhaps, it is given to the passing stranger, and then gradually introduced among themselves, until it become general in the dealings of the country. But in Ulster, where every owner of a cabin is a merchant on his own risk, who purchases flax to sell in the manufactured state, the usual custom of transfers makes him acquainted with the solidity of the circulating medium, which he accepts; and, which such a man, the change from specie to paper must be progressively and slowly...⁷⁰

A tally was usually taken of the fees owed to the farmer who rented out the land and cabin and the fees the tenants owed to the farmer for the use of equipment and other services that he might provide. At the end of the year these would be totalled and usually the difference would then be compensated.

Wakefield writes in a time when the cottage industry was strong and many workers tried to make their own linen products that were sold in markets. Once technology made factories more economical, peasants were not needed to work out of their homes. Ulster and the eastern counties had more circulating currency because they were generally more developed and many urban workers were paid a wage.

⁷⁰ Edward Wakefield, *An Account of Ireland, Statistical and Political*, Volume 2 (London: Longnam, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, Paternoster-Row, 1812), 182.

Prevailing Forms of Social Structures

The Community and the Family

Before the nineteenth century, Irish society was based on a communal structure. Although there were significant developments in Ireland, there remained a degree of isolation (due to the rural nature of the country) that encouraged the persistence of such older forms of social structure as rundale, based collective ownership and farming of a tract of land.⁷¹

In the first part of the nineteenth century, Ireland's social structure saw a switch from a community-based organisation to a more family-based structure. The result was the stem family, which became the dominant social institution.⁷² This family structure developed from post famine adjustments among medium farmers who needed a small group for their self-reliance.

The family unit (made up of the nuclear core) came to play an integral role in making the means for survival and continuing the reproduction of their way of life.

In rural Ireland the family retains its dominance as a social institution, and within the family there are fairly well-defined spheres of responsibility. The father, in the case of a farm-owner, organizes the work on the land and undertakes the business transactions. The mother runs the farmhouse and is responsible for the children. Decisions concerning the education of the children are taken normally by the

⁷¹ This is a form of community organisation that involves collective farming by extended families (kin) on a group owned land holding. The land was divided into strips that were then assigned to different families for a period of time before the land was re-assigned to another family in the community. The purpose of this rotation was to ensure that one family was not favoured by better land or made to work on a poorer soil area. This system of community and land division existed in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries but became unfeasible after the population forced the necessity of extended land subdivision.

⁷² Desmond Anderson, "Education and Rural Society in the Irish Republic", *Éire-Ireland* 3, no. 3 (1968): 91.

mother. The farm will be inherited by one of the sons but there is no prior certainty as to which it will be."⁷³

Families were dependent on the additional labour of their children to ensure their family's survival. This structure is dependent on the family as a unit of production and not consumption.⁷⁴

Children were an essential part of this system, being socialised and essentially trained to preserve the traditions of their community. Males and females were taken under the instruction of their parents, uncles/aunts and other members of the community, to learn their functions for the future. They were expected to learn not only gender roles but also the skills needed to reproduce a similar family of their own.⁷⁵ For males, this very often included the ability to do strenuous labour, employed by others (like larger farmers or in the linen cottage industry) and by providing food for their families through farming on their own land. The stem family structure also involved the passing down of property to one offspring.

While one son may be acquiring the skills to set off to an itinerant lifestyle, the other siblings were also learning skills that very often, especially in the mid- to late nineteenth century, led them to become migrant workers or to emigrate permanently. In the early part of the century, the tradition was to divide up the land for all the children to create their own families, later in the century this practice changed because it was not economically feasible and land was becoming scarce with the growing population of Ireland. The stem family

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Carles Salazar, *A Sentimental Economy: Commodity and Community in Rural Ireland* (Providence: Bergham Books, 1996), 94.

⁷⁵ This was only possible in the first part of the nineteenth century.

system developed (for practical reasons) that involved the inheritance of the land to be passed to one son only, while the others had to find a place⁷⁶ for themselves. As David Fitzpatrick explains "[the] surplus children were settled with emigration passages, 'fortunes', apprenticeship, training or even subsidiary plots of land".⁷⁷ As a result, Ireland became an increasingly mobile society in the nineteenth century.

The need for mobility became more prominent with the increasing shortage of land and the inability of the family to take care of all its members. The individual left his home community in order to live off the surplus available in other communities. The nuclear family unit took the place that the community once had, and while community retained a degree of importance, the wider economic environment is the next influential frame in play.

Fairs

Fairs were seasonal events that provided an atmosphere akin to *patron* celebrations (explained below). Starting as early as the ninth century,⁷⁸ fairs were held once or twice a year on average but this figure depended on the size and population of the location (see Table 4.9). Smaller centres would hold fairs less often but those located in larger towns could occur with greater frequency dependant on need.⁷⁹ Although these venues were

⁷⁶ Not only did they have to find their own land on which to live but also obtain some form of employment.

⁷⁷ David Fitzpatrick, "Class, Family and Rural Unrest", in *Irish Studies: Ireland: Land, Politics and People*, edited by P. J. Drudy (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 62-3.

⁷⁸ Anne O'Dowd, "Folklife and Folk Traditions", in *The Irish Countryside*, ed. Desmond Gillmor (Dublin: Wolfhound Press, 1989), 129.

⁷⁹ Raymond Gillespie, "fairs and markets", in *The Oxford Companion to Irish History*. Edited by S. J. Connolly (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 185.

usually highly specialised there was little in the way of an organised infrastructure.⁸⁰ In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries livestock fairs became very prominent (eg. pig fairs).

The lack of structure of the fair left room for a liberal atmosphere that included musicians, artisans and the appearance of people in the margins of society. Fairs were not only a place for useful economical exchanges and making connections⁸¹ but they could also get riotous.⁸²

Table 4.9
The Frequency of Fairs⁸³

Year	1684	1770s	1852	1890
Number of Recorded Fairs	503	3,000	1,297	793

Fairs were given more importance than markets because they involved the selling of specialised items like livestock. Farmers would plan their whole year of work based on the dates of fairs which most frequently occurred in May and October.⁸⁴ Other less attended fairs occurred in February and March, and July and August.⁸⁵

What follows are some descriptions of early nineteenth-century fairs from several sources.

The fair is held usually in the ordinary market-place, being in itself no more than a market, except from the dignity and importance, and, we may add, contumacious excitement of the chief thing sold. There are a few poor stalls for the huckster of

⁸⁰ Ibid., 184.

⁸¹ Artelia Court, *Puck of the Droms: The Lives and Literature of the Irish Tinklers* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1985), 14.

⁸² Gillespie, 185.

⁸³ Ibid., 184.

⁸⁴ O'Dowd, 132.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 136.

pedlar trade; one gambling tumabout with halfpenny stakes; a little stage on a cart for the hoaxing sale of good-for-nothing haberdashery; no shows of any kind, no toys, and only three most unattractive stalls for stale-looking cakes and commonplace gingerbread, with no gilt upon it, not even the shining brown varnish which is the only admissible substitute. The fair is devoted to higher purpose.⁸⁶

"A pot boiling outside a tent, lumps of salt beef and cabbage." And of course, whiskey, illicit whiskey, poteen. A dozen fiddlers played for dances, making "an amalgamation of sounds most extraordinary that ever tickled the ear of a musician. Everybody drunk or sober took a share in the long dance, and I have seen a row of a hundred people laboring at the jig step."⁸⁷

Here is another description of a fair of early nineteenth century. Called the fair of Magheramore, it was held every October 1 in Ardara in county Donegal.

When the buying and selling was finished the activity got started on the diamond. The quack doctor got to work selling medicines which would cure all diseases. The blind fiddler from Glenfin was there, as well as the three card trick men and the thimble-rigger. MacGill describes the skill of the man who sold gold watches and half-crowns which he wrapped up in a paper bag...A fair was usually a great place when the world was young.⁸⁸

William Thackeray describes a fair in Castledermot, county Kildare (1842).

The long street of the place was thronged with oxen, sheep and horses and with those who wished to see to sell or to buy. The squires were all together in a cluster at the police house: the owners of the horses rode up and down showing the best paces of their brutes: among them you might see Paddy in his ragged frieze coat seated on his donkey's bare rump and proposing him for sale. 'I think I saw a score of this humble though useful breed that were brought for sale to the fair. 'I can sell him,' says one fellow with a pompous

⁸⁶ "An Irish Pig-Fair", *Chambers's Edinburgh Journal*, new series, (Saturday May 23 1846), 335.

⁸⁷ This is an account of Donnybrook Fair by Sir Jonah Barrington, *Personal Sketches of His Own Times*, 1790 quoted in Padraic Colum, *A Treasury of Irish Folklore*, 2nd revised edition (New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1967), 404.

⁸⁸ Patrick Logan, *Fair Day: The Story of Irish Fairs and Markets* (Belfast: Appletree Press, 1972), 64.

air 'wid his tackle or widout.' He was looking as grave over the negotiation as if it had been for a thousand pounds.

Besides donkeys of course there was plenty of poultry and there were pigs without number, shrieking and struggling and pushing hither and thither among the crowd rebellious to the straw rope. It was a fine thing to see one huge grunter and the manner in which he was landed into the cart....⁸⁹

The main function of the average fair was the buying and selling of livestock, produce and wares. It was a place for social and economical interaction and the occasion also brought activities of pleasure like raves, sports, and the enjoyment of music and poets.

Hiring Fairs

Hiring Fairs were held twice a year mostly in Ulster⁹⁰ and involved the gathering of capable men to be selected by potential hirers as farm labourers. At these fairs, the hirers (farmers) would negotiate the terms of employment (type of work, wage and lodgings)⁹¹ for contracts of usually six months. These fairs were similar to the fairs mentioned above. A large number of people would come for one central reason but other activities and amusements were present. Not only was this another location for the travelling musician to earn income but these professionals were essentially grouped with other men of the same class also trying to subsist through the attainment of patronage/employment.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 65.

⁹⁰ Jonathan Bell, "Hiring Fairs", in *The Oxford Companion to Irish History*, ed. J. Connolly (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 242.

⁹¹ Ibid., 241.

Markets

Markets were usually weekly occurrences within an urban infrastructure involving a significant and substantial amount of sales, exchanges or trades.⁹² The exchanges were on an economic, social and even political level.⁹³ Those men in a higher social position, like landlords and middlemen, had direct control over the prices and they regulated markets through tolls and patents. The following is an obviously exaggerated account of the strictness enforced at markets. John Pitt gives this statement in 1766 about market. "...you could not buy an egg or a pound of butter but at the tingling of a bell and on a particular spot."⁹⁴ This kind of regulatory action was taken to enforce and maintain social order within the venue.⁹⁵

Markets, like fairs, featured the travelling musician in all his forms. The ballad singers sold their ballads and teamed up with fiddlers, and the pipers provided the dancers with their music.

⁹² Gillespie, 184.

⁹³ Adrian Randall, Andrew Charlesworth, Richard Sheldon and David Walsh, "Markets, Market Culture and Popular Protest in Eighteenth-Century Britain and Ireland" in *Markets, Market Culture and Popular Protest in Eighteenth-Century Britain and Ireland*, ed. Adrian Randall and Andrew Charlesworth (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1996), 12.

⁹⁴ British Library, Hardwicke Mss., Pitt to Hardwicke, 21, 20, December 1766. Found in Randall, 15.

⁹⁵ Randall, 15.

Patrons

Patrons (or patterns) were annual events when communities/parishes would celebrate the feast day of a local (patron) saint. The day included religious activities followed by a fair-like atmosphere, which included economic exchanges and music, dancing, and other social activities. After the parish disapproved of the increasingly celebrative form of this occasion (rather than religious), the pattern declined and eventually ceased to be practised by the 1870s.⁹⁶

These events, despite their religious nature, developed into another venue where the people could include all their favourite pastimes like dancing and the enjoyment of music. By the middle of the nineteenth century, patrons became so celebratory, that priests soon objected to the presence of pipers, in particular, because these professionals encouraged the peasantry to frivolous diversions.

Weddings

Weddings were much-celebrated events in for the Irish rural population. The guests to the wedding totalled twenty to forty relatives who mostly travelled by foot.⁹⁷ The following account is from Thomas Crofton Croker's *Researches in the South of Ireland* (1824).

"A house with three contiguous apartments is selected for a wedding; the reason of this is to preserve a distinction between the classes of company expected. The best

⁹⁶ S. J. Connolly, "pattern", in *The Oxford Companion to Irish History*. Edited by S. J. Connolly (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 436.

⁹⁷ E. E. Evans, *Irish Heritage: The Landscape, the People and their Work* (Dundalk: Dundalgan Press, 1943), 171.

apartment is reserved for the bride and bridegroom, the priest, the piper, and the more opulent and respectable guests, as the landlord, his family and the neighbouring gentry, who are always invited and usually attend on such occasions. The second apartment is appropriated for the neighbours in general; and the third, or an out-house, is devoted to the reception of buckaugh, shulers, and other beggars. When the marriage is celebrated two collections are raised amongst the guests, the first for the priest, the other for the piper. The assembly does not take place until late in the evening, when the marriage ceremony is performed, and the festivities seldom conclude before day-break the next morning.⁹⁸

The piper was the most prominent, if not the only instruments that took part in weddings. Being the predecessor of the noble harpers, the piper had a degree of status that could not be matched by another instrumentalist or singer.

Wakes and Funerals⁹⁹

Practices connected with death require very specific rituals and events (wakes and funerals). Wakes included mournful traditions, like the presence of a keener (see **Chapter Three**) to sing of the death, and activities of merriment, like the children playing games. E. E. Evan's quotes Maria Edgeworth in *Irish Heritage: The Landscape, the People and their Work*, "more matches were made at wakes than weddings."¹⁰⁰ An account of the peasant wake is found in Croker's¹⁰¹ *Researches in the South of Ireland* (1824).

⁹⁸ Thomas Crofton Croker, *Researches in the South of Ireland* (London: 1824), introduction by Kevin Danaher (reprint: Shannon: Irish University Press, 1969), 235.

⁹⁹ William Carleton, "Larry M'Farland's Wake," in *Traits and Stories of the Irish Peasantry* Vol. I, 84-114 (London: William Tegg, 1869).

¹⁰⁰ Evans, 169.

¹⁰¹ Thomas Crofton Croker (1798-1854) was born in county Cork as the son of an army officer. He was a clerk in the admiralty in London from 1818-50. He travelled extensively throughout the west of Ireland and collected stories and songs (which he sent to Thomas Moore). For more information see **Appendix 2**.

The wake of a corpse is a scene of merriment rather than of mourning. The body lies exposed in the coffin for two or three nights previous to interment, surrounded by many candles, and with the face uncovered. To avert misfortune arising from the death of the heads of families, when a man dies his head is placed at the foot of the bed; but this ceremony is not deemed necessary with women, and they are allowed to remain in the usual position. In the evening a general assembly of the neighbours takes place, when they are entertained with whiskey, tobacco and snuff. On these occasions songs are sung and stories related, while the younger part of the company beguile the time with various games, and sports, such as blind man's buff, or hunt the slipper. Dancing, or rather running in a ring, round an individual, who performs various evolutions, is also a common amusement...¹⁰²

Funerals involved such rituals as carrying the coffin around the church three times and white washing around the windows and doors of the widow's (or widower's) house to prevent the spirit of the departed from returning.¹⁰³

Keeners and pipers were the most prominent musicians at wakes and funerals. The keener's music was produced by their voice (making the human element so prominently in music by the intonation and emotions produced in song) and the final farewell of a loved one marked by the dignity of powerful sound of the *uilleann* (or highland) pipes.

While rituals played an important part in the social life of the peasantry, they also impacted the economic environment of the itinerant musician. Rituals determined the role and demand for specific music and the appropriate musician.



The contextual information provided here is brief and further research is needed to flesh out the conditions in which the travelling musician lived to give more depth to this

¹⁰² Croker, 170-1.

¹⁰³ Evans, 170.

study. Nonetheless, I will proceed to the next chapter to demonstrate how the merging of contextual information and contemporary sources on musician's practices can contribute to a unique understanding would otherwise be overlooked.



CHAPTER FIVE

A CONCLUDING ASSESSMENT: THE IRISH TRAVELLING MUSICIAN'S PRACTICES IN CONTEXT OF EARLY NINETEENTH-CENTURY SOCIETY

Travelling musicians lived in the same conditions and circumstances as their fellow peasantry workers in the first part of the nineteenth-century Irish society. The concern, in this chapter, is to draw a parallel between the life conditions of the general population and those of the itinerant musician. The conditions and societal rules that govern class, gender and status, for example, are carried over to the lives of the travelling musician and determine or influence the practices they use. Nineteenth-century musicians, like their patrons and fellow countrymen, had a high degree of adaptability, and their strategies for survival are quite similar upon analysis. The major difference between the travelling musician and his siblings was the type of work available to them (involving different skills, knowledge and tools of their trade). For the purpose of perceiving musical practices within their larger context I employ a historical materialist approach. Finally this thesis is assessed for its value to Irish musical scholarship.

Historical Materialism

According to Roy Bhaskar, in *A Dictionary of Marxist Thought*, historical materialism is defined in the following way.

Historical materialism asserts the causal primacy of men's and women's mode of production and reproduction of their natural (physical) being, or of the labour process more generally, in the development of human history.¹

¹ Roy Bhaskar, "materialism", in *A Dictionary of Marxist Thought*, edited by Tom Bottomore (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Publisher Limited, 1983), 324.

All men (and women) are materialistically connected² to one another (through being part of a society) to fulfil their *means of subsistence*.³ In order to understand the adopted practices of a segment of a society, all aspects of this society need to be studied. The segment, studied here, are the musical practices of the Irish travelling musician, and the whole is Irish society in the first half of the nineteenth century.

The German Ideology (written in 1845-46, co-authored by Frederick Engels) is Marx's first work on what was later to be called historical materialism⁴. To provide the basics of this theoretical outlook, I draw on an introduction written by C. J. Arthur. Society, as a structured organisation of humans, is divided into two groups. The first group (which includes all members of society) consists of individuals who are born into conditions beyond their control. The historical circumstances (the era for example) and the class of the individual are predetermined which fundamentally limits the possibilities available to them.⁵ The second group involves a select part of the population, which has a degree of power and can alter the circumstances in which they live. The national elite has the ability to change the organisational structure of society and by doing so can produce "new men by those circumstances."⁶

² Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The German Ideology*, edited with introduction by C. J. Arthur (New York: International Publishers, 1996), 50.

³ Means of subsistence involves all the elements that are required to reproduce and ensure the survival of a society (fundamental requirements like food, water and shelter)

⁴ Marx and Engels, 4.

⁵ Ibid., 23.

⁶ Ibid.

The species itself at the dawn of history already had a certain mode of life before it could begin to recreate itself through solving the problems which faced it with solutions also conditioned by the given circumstances.⁷

Essentially the above information can be summarised in these related statements; "all men are both products of circumstances and potential changers of circumstances" and "circumstances make men just as much as men make circumstances".⁸

Another aspect of the historical materialist approach emphasised in this chapter, is the need to view historical events and practices within their context. As stated in Part One of *The German Ideology* the "historical development of men" viewed "apart from real history" is an abstraction and has "no value whatsoever".⁹ Under the heading "Civil Society and the Conception of History", Marx and Engels give insight to understanding tradition.

History is nothing but the succession of the separate generations, each of which exploits the materials, the capital funds, the productive forces handed down to it by all preceding generations, and thus, on the one hand, continues the traditional activity in completely changed circumstances and, on the other, modifies the old circumstances with a completely changed activity.¹⁰

Humanity is essentially objectified, stressing the practical motivation for the actions¹¹ that are taken. In addition, Marx and Engels stress the need to study all previously generations occurring before the historical period being examined. This is a huge undertaking that has yet to be done.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid., 22, 59.

⁹ Ibid., 48.

¹⁰ Ibid., 57.

¹¹ Bhaskar, 325.

Society acts as a social and productive unit that involves the *forces of production* (comprising of the means such as land, resources and tools, and labour) and *social relations of production*.

The production of life, both of one's own in labour and of fresh life in procreation, now appears as a double relationship: on the one hand as a natural, on the hand as a social relationship. By social we understand the co-operation of several individuals, no matter under what conditions, in what manner and to what end. It follows from this that a certain mode of production, or industrial stage, is always combined with a certain mode of co-operation, or social stage, and this mode of co-operation is itself a "productive force".¹²

In general, society's function is to ensure the survival of its members by giving structure that requires the recreation of certain relationships. Society is contingent on the basic need for procreation, as stated above. Specifically, the way each society is structured is unique realising roles in a very specific way and providing for various needs.

Music making can be viewed as just another form of productive labour having a similar function to other types of work → to meet the labourer's means of subsistence and play a productive role in society. Similar to other forms of labour, the product that results, whether a physical object or a service, caters to the needs (and desires) of the community in which they are created. Despite the fact that the requirements of sustaining a society are basically the same, the way the society's needs are realised is often quite different. In the first half of the nineteenth century, Ireland's peasantry had the basic need for food, shelter and community, but their demands extended beyond this to include the services of music professionals. Music was present in this society because it served an important function in the lives of the musicians as well as its patrons.

¹² Laurence Harris, "forces and relations of production", in *A Dictionary of Marxist Thought*, 178.

This chapter uses historical materialist theory to provide basic structure to the ideas presented. By drawing from the information already provided in **Chapter Three and Four**, I will point to some possible rational motivations for the practices adopted by the travelling musician. I have divided the chapter into four distinct aspects. The first discussed is the necessity for the primacy of the function of the individual in a society. Next the role of previously established traditions is discussed in relation to music practices. Variable and invariable factors (such as local conditions (variable) and gender (invariable)) are examined as restraints on an individual's activities, and finally the larger historical circumstances of the era, such as nationalism, are briefly explored. Due to the preliminary nature of this study, as well as the scope of the material examined, the findings will be speculative. Future study will be necessary to provide supporting documentation to the ideas presented in this chapter.

The Function of the Travelling Musician's Music to His Patron

Since the primary patrons of the travelling musician were the peasantry class, it is from this perspective that I look for the main function of their music. The travelling musician's music was primarily secular in nature with its main service being in the interest of entertainment. The provision of dance music by the travelling instrumentalist and the dancing master served as a much-needed distraction. After an intense day of work, the community created a social venue in which they could regain their spirits to go back to another day of labour. The interaction between the sexes is another important function of the travelling musician's music that not only significantly impacted the popularity and growth of this musical profession, but also played a significant part in its demise.¹³

In addition to the entertainment and social function, music played an important part in ceremonies such as weddings, wakes, funerals and festivity days. The traditions from Ireland's past make the provision of the appropriate musical professional necessary. Music is present to keep with tradition and in many ways it serves to remind and reinforce the connection of individuals to each other and the society in which they live.

The presence of a travelling musician in a community was a source of pride and status. However only those communities that could properly accommodate these itinerants enjoyed their services. The visiting musician, in addition to his function in the community, was a symbol of surplus. One could almost stretch this to be a type of conspicuous consumption but the implication of this term is far greater than I am willing to assert.¹⁴

The use of an instrument (the pipes especially), since it required a significant capital investment, was almost as symbolic as the dancing master's pumps and stockings. Perhaps the instrument played a similar role as the conspicuous consumption of music as a product.

As he uncovered his pipes their splendour quite took Mr. Lowe by surprise. The keys were of silver, and the bag covered with crimson velvet fringed with gold; while the little bellows was quite a work of art, so beautifully was it carved and ornamented with silver and ivory. Having tied the oval-shaped piece of velvet with a ribbon attached to each end above his knee...¹⁵

This description mentions materials (gold, silver, ivory and velvet) that indicate the presence of surplus in the construction of the pipes. Keeping in mind the political advantage of

¹³ The demise of the travelling musician was severely affected by the disapproval of parish priests who felt that the distance between the sexes should be maintained to avoid the problems of over population and further land division. (O'Neill, *Irish Minstrels and Musicians*, 154.)

¹⁴ Conspicuous consumption implies an excess of wealth that is being frivolously spent. In the case of the Irish peasantry interpretation of this term means that there was a tendency to live above the most basic means of subsistence.

¹⁵ Charles J. Kickham, *Knocknagow* (Dublin: J. Duffy, 1879), introduction by Robert Lee Wolfe (New York: Garland Publishing, 1979), 215.

describing the musicians instrument in this way, the image was definitely one that the peasantry were aware of and may have recounted themselves.

The political function of music is most clearly seen in the songs of the ballad singer. Although Ireland's social elite was the most visible group that used music for this purpose, the effect on the lives of the peasantry cannot be ignored. Certainly politics played an important role for the majority of the Irish people (the consumers of these ballads).¹⁶ Songs with political messages reached great popularity throughout the country and even among the Diaspora abroad.¹⁷

Following in the Traditions of Previous Generations

Since the musician is born into a society, he is governed by the traditions that govern all members of that society. If a child, for some reason, could not contribute to the established domestic system and community structure in place, it became necessary for him to find another form of labour that served a useful function in society. Directly impacting the decision of the parents of a blind son, especially, was the past tradition of the travelling harpist (like O'Carolan and O'Neill). In other cases the child might be sent away to become a hedge schoolmaster.

The practice of travelling alone made perfect economical sense that most likely promoted the continuance of this tradition. Since there was limited surplus available in each community, travelling in pairs would be economically inefficient because only one musician

¹⁶ The nineteenth century was a time of considerable protests and violence about rent prices, land tenure and the lack of poor relief funds for those in need.

was needed to carry out the desired services for the community. In the case of the dancing master an instrumentalist was needed to provide the music to which he and his patrons would dance.

In the early nineteenth century a new tradition developed based on the limitations of land and employment. It became necessary for more members of society to increase their mobility in order to find enough work to survive. Although this tradition was already present in the practices of the travelling musician, Ireland's population increase and the demise of the cottage industry resulting in surplus labour, proved to be conditions that necessitated a change from previous behaviour. This new strategy was to minimise the number of people dependent for survival on the individual's income. The travelling musician was usually responsible for sustaining his or her own survival, with the possible exception of those blind minstrels who made use of a guide. The shift in the inheritance system of the small farmer saw a change from giving a portion of his land to all of his offspring, to only one son being the inheritor while the other children needed to find their own means of subsistence elsewhere.

Circumstantial Restraints

There are many variable and invariable factors that determine the practices adopted, not only by the travelling musician, but also the rest of the Irish population. These factors include gender, class, education, travel resources, demand and economic circumstances. These components, as well as others, have been addressed above and will be discussed below as they apply to music practices.

¹⁷ This statement is an over-simplification but the subject is outside the scope of this

Perhaps the most elemental shaping circumstance of the individual is gender.

Whether one is male or female limits or broadens the possibilities available. In the case of the female, extensive travelling alone was not a socially accepted practice while for males this seemed not to be an issue. Females, in the first half of the nineteenth century, did not have the option to become a travelling instrumentalist and were more likely to be singers with limited travelling (usually in groups accompanied by a male).

The choice of instrument was based on variable factors specific to the community or in which the child resided. In some cases there was no choice involved in selecting the instrument simply because it may have been the only one available or the only available instructor played a particular instrument. Certainly in the case of hereditary families the instrument would be dictated by the father or uncle who was to teach the child.

The length of stay of the travelling musician and dancing master depended on the amount of surplus available in the community. An analogy to the hunter and gatherer society may prove useful in explaining the reasoning behind the practices of the travelling musician. Hunting and gathering societies (divided into groups) were itinerant by necessity. They would move to different geographical locations and feed off the resources available, like vegetation and wildlife. Once these resources were depleted they would move on to another location where the resources were plentiful. Using this strategy, the social group had no fixed place of residence but a travelling circuit would develop. After a year or two the group would return to the first geographic location when its resources had been replenished over time and the cycle would begin anew.

Instead of feeding off the land, the travelling musician drew his subsistence off the surplus and hospitality available in the communities he visited. As long as there was

sufficient surplus to sustain the musician, he would stay and logically this would determine the length of their stays. In addition the musician, like that in the society described above, had no permanent residence relying on the hospitality of his patrons on his travelling circuit.

The practical reason why urban areas were not the focus of the travelling musician's patronage was because these centres already had established sedentary musicians that provided for the needs of the local population. Also, since the distance travelled was limited due to transport by foot and since towns could be quite distant from the next (see **Figure 4.6** (page 107)) it was impracticable, if not impossible, for travelling musicians to depend on patronage only in major urban centres.

In rural areas, whenever there was a visiting instrumentalist or dancing master, they had the attention of the whole community. Unlike in urban towns where there were pubs, shops and other places to spend any surplus income, the peasantry had a degree of isolation that made the visit of a minstrel even more celebrated and special. The musician and dancing master were catered to in a way that would not have been possible in urban centres. Not only was he provided with a venue in which to perform and earn his means of subsistence, but he was also supplied with food and lodgings for the duration of his stay in exchange for private music or dance lessons for the children of the house.

Circumstances in the nineteenth century required the musician, like his peasantry counterpart, to have other forms of employment that could provide additional income. The flexibility of the Irish to changing conditions proved essential to the survival of this population. High adaptability can be seen in the ballad singer. He switched from a day labourer to or from a travelling minstrel depending on the economic advantage of the profession at the time.

In addition to providing for the demand of music, the community expected these minstrels to have other skills and knowledge that they would share as part of the economic exchange. The travelling instrumentalist was able to repair and even make instruments, as well as being considered a storyteller. The dance master taught modes of courtship to both sexes and sometimes headed a fencing school.

A survival skill that both the musician and the peasant labourer used was to move where there was less competition and therefore a greater chance to obtain employment. According to John W. Boyle's chapter "A Marginal Figure: The Irish Rural Laborer,"¹⁸ workers came to Britain in search of a "less overstocked labor market".¹⁹ The parallel can be seen with the travelling musician who chose the rural population who, although they made up the majority, were spread out allowing for the opportunity for the occasional visitor (in the city, the market was already accounted for by other musicians). Both travelling musician and labourers extended their travels outside the country, to England and Scotland.

I have, in this chapter only looked at the shaping circumstantial restraints from a very broad point of view. Any study focusing on a smaller part of Ireland (be it province to community) will result in very specific factors that play a defining role in the practices found in that particular area.

¹⁸ John W. Boyle, "A Marginal Figure: The Irish Rural Laborer" in *Irish Peasants: Violence and Political Unrest, 1780-1914*, edited by Samuel Clark and James S. Donnelly Jr. (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1983), 311-338.

¹⁹ Ibid, 319.

Larger Historical Influences

Nationalism is the most prominent influential force in the first half of the nineteenth century. **Chapter One** focuses on the effect of this movement on the literature produced and the image of the Irish but there is more to nationalism that effected the actual practices of the travelling musician. The ballad singer is the most obvious of this itinerant group. The songs he sang were mostly political because there was popular demand for these items and the elites had considerable control over the print medium. In order to earn a wage that could sustain their survival, these singers were left little choice as to what they sang and often risked police detainment and the threat of imprisonment.

Ireland's capitalistic/imperialistic structure and the land tenure system are other larger historical influences that are worth exploration. This would involve much more attention than I can give here.



Assessing this Study and looking Towards Future Research

This thesis advances Irish musical studies in several ways. My focus on the producers of music, travelling musicians, gives equal importance to both the musical repertoire (the topic of most Irish musical studies) and the musician. When looking specifically at the travelling musicians of the first half of the nineteenth century, it becomes clear that they were subject to the material realities of the time. Further interpretation of their practices (involving the use of certain repertoire) demands that these professionals be placed in their historical context. The travelling musician played a specific function within the structure and organisation of a society. Not only is it necessary to situate the musician in

the society in which he operates, but it becomes essential to understand how this society developed. To satisfy a historical materialist perspective, research must be done on previous centuries to the era in focus. An understanding of previous generations will shed light on what factors directly shaped the conditions examined. To simply identify societal structure and musical practices as traditional misses the reason for their development. Without this information, a comprehensive exploration of the subject in question is incomplete. It is only after the exploration of the elements that makes up a society (like politics and economy) that limitations and constrictions of certain practices can be determined.

My examination of nineteenth-century source materials question what information can be taken from these sources. By cautiously sorting through the information provided in contemporary writings, I have attempted to provide a counter-dose to the idealised conceptions that consistently circulate in present day scholarship. While scholars are aware of the political function of music and magnify its importance, few have gone beyond this focus to ascertain the validity of these general assumptions. It is in **Chapter One** that I put the authenticity of the "Irishness" of song collections of the nineteenth century into question. From this awareness many documented aspects of musical behaviour and otherwise must be backed by less politically charged supporting documentation. If these songs do not represent "the Irish people", then are there songs that do? Since all printed documents pass through the social elite (who shared certain biases), the challenge is to determine what has been filtered out of songs of Irish peasantry songs and what has been added.

When I first started this endeavour, I thought that my topic would be straight forward, but in the course of my research I came to realise the degree of complexity involved. In order to understand the Irish travelling musician, they must be placed on a

foundation of historical circumstances and conditions. These conditions, while shaped by the past, are also linked to the historical circumstances outside the physical and temporal domain studied. For example, an understanding of nineteenth-century Ireland must include an analysis of the relationship between England and Ireland and the result of the settlement of English and Scottish Protestants starting in the seventeenth century. For one to comprehend the industrialisation of parts of Ireland, England's industrialisation must be examined. Further research also needs to be done on the internal dynamics present in the nineteenth century (like the relationship between Catholics and Protestants). Although this kind of extensive research is not a reasonable undertaking for a single ethnomusicologist, the results of this research need to be amassed and considered in a context grounded understanding of musicians and their repertoire is to be achieved.

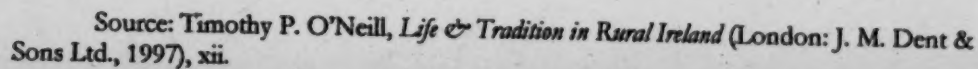
Many other questions arise out of the work presented in this thesis. While my focus has been on rural Ireland and music professionals that serve the rustic peasantry, it is clear that music professionals in urban areas lived in different conditions and had contrasting practices. This is certainly an area that needs to be explored, despite the limited contemporary literature available. A direct contrast of the travelling musician and the sedentary urban musician may prove interesting and informative.

This thesis simply illuminates the scene of the travelling musician and brings forward neglected areas in need of research. I believe that musical scholarship must ultimately be connected with the context out of which the musicians and their music were born. Research into many disciplines is unavoidable but how does a music scholar handle all these diverse dimensions? A comprehensive approach must be developed incorporating a theoretical basis like historical materialism. A historical materialist perspective makes for a promising interpretative platform resulting in valuable input, not only in the understanding of the

practices of the travelling musician, but also in the understanding of Irish music and the Irish musical repertoire so popular today.



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APPENDIX 2

MEMBERS OF THE IRISH SOCIAL ELITE

Individuals

Banim, John (1798-1842)

Banim was born in county Kilkenny but later moved to London, Banim a student of St. John's College (Kilkenny) he was a prolific writer of novels and stories.¹

Croker, Thomas Crofton (1798-1854)

Born in county Cork, Croker was the son of an army officer. He was a clerk in the admiralty in London from 1818-50. He travelled extensively throughout the west of Ireland and collected stories and songs (which he sent to Thomas Moore). His works include *Fairy Legends and Traditions of the South of Ireland* (1825) and *Researches in the South of Ireland* (1824). These works were widely read although contemporary and later critics doubt his fidelity to his sources.²

Davis, Thomas Osborne: (1814-1845)

Born in Mallow, county Cork, Davis was educated at Trinity College. He was part of the Irish Bar in 1838 and joined the Repeal Association in 1840³. Thomas Davis was the co-founder of the political publication *The Nation* and acted as the leader of the Young Irelanders from 1842-1845. He is the author of many patriotic ballads⁴ as a way of bringing a sense of nationality to his mass public. Thomas Davis is considered by many the "purest Irish patriot."

Duffy, Charles Gavan (1816-1903)

A native of county Monaghan, Duffy took on the task of educating himself. He became involved as the editor of the *Vindicator* and was the co-founder/editor of the

¹ Brian Cleeves, *Dictionary of Irish Writers: Fiction* (Cork: The Mercier Press, 1967), 14.

² S. J. Connolly, "Croker, Thomas Crofton" in *The Oxford Companion to Irish History*, edited by S. J. Connolly (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 127.

³ R. F. Foster, *Modern Ireland 1600-1971* (New York: Penguin Group, 1989), 311.

⁴ Peter Gray, "Davis, Thomas" in *The Oxford Companion to Irish History*, 137.

Nation. After travelling throughout Australia and Europe, he published several works including his reminiscences and political texts on *Young Ireland*⁵.

Edgeworth, Maria (1767-1849)

Edgeworth was brought to Ireland by her father in 1782. Her duties on his large estate include the writing of a parental manual (*The Parent's Assistant*, 1796). She attempted to show the realities of Irish life in her novel *Ormond* (1817). Maria's contact with the peasantry of Ireland was limited until 1817 when she became the manager of brother's estate and needed to deal with the tenants and their education⁶.

Emmet, Robert (1778-1803)

Born in Dublin, Emmet was educated at Trinity College where he was a leader of the United Irishmen. He was privy to discussions and had the support from Napoleon and Charles Maurice de Talleyrand-Périgord (foreign minister of France) about Irish independence. When taking place in an unsuccessful rebellion, he was captured, convicted and hanged⁷.

Griffin, Gerald (1803-1840)

Griffin was born in county Limerick and lived in London in 1823. Griffin was also a popular author of stories and novels (his major work is the novel *The Collegians* 1829)⁸.

Hall, S.C. (1800-1881)

Also known as Maria Anna Hall, before her marriage in 1824, she was born in Dublin. Most of her works (which include verses, plays, stories and novels) were for an English audience. *Stories of the Irish Peasantry* (1850) was considered her best work but it was not widely read in Ireland⁹.

Joyce, Patrick Weston (1827-1914)

Joyce was part of the trio of collectors (along with Bunting and Petrie) of Irish music into collections for publication and distribution. He was born in an Irish speaking

⁵ Foster, 311.

⁶ Cleeves, *Fiction*, 44-45.

⁷ Foster, 285.

⁸ Cleeves, *Fiction*, 55.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 57.

area, speaking Ireland's native tongue and trained as a traditional singer. He published many collections in the second half of the nineteenth century¹⁰.

Kickham, Charles Joseph (1826-1882)

Born in Mullinahone, county Tipperary, Kickham was a member of the Fenian Brotherhood for which he was imprisoned for four years¹¹. From 1873, until death, Kickham was the president of the supreme council of the Irish Republican Brotherhood¹². A ballad-writer and author, he is best known for his work *Knocknagow, or the Homes of Tipperary* (1873).

Mangan, James Clarence (1803-1849)

Born in Dublin as the son of a poor grocer, Mangan was fortunate to be educated by a priest who taught him German among other things¹³. In addition to publishing several works of Irish poetry, Mangan wrote under several pen names for *The Nation* and translated German poetry.

MacDonnell, Dr. James

James MacDonnell was part of the national elite in that he was one of the organisers of the Belfast Harp Festival of 1792. It is through his patronage that Edward Bunting became involved in the preservation of Irish harp music. He was a very public figure of Belfast society where he practised medicine and scientific research. As a liberal Protestant, he favoured a Catholic emancipation.

McCracken, Henry Joy (1767-1798)

McCracken was born in Belfast into the leading family in the linen trade. His heritage was from Huguenot (Protestant) descent and he was an early member of United Irishmen in 1791. For his involvement in rebellious activity in county Antrim, he was tried and hanged¹⁴.

¹⁰ Helen Sewell Johnson, *The History of Anglo-Irish Ballad Tradition* (Ann Arbor: University of Pennsylvania, PhD Dissertation in Folklore, 1973), 99.

¹¹ Charles J. Kickham, *The Eagle of Garry and Tales of Tipperary* (Dublin: The Talbot Press Limited, 1963), v.

¹² Richard Vincent Comerford, "Kickham, Charles J." in *The Oxford Companion to Irish History*, 283.

¹³ Cleeves, *Fiction*, 87.

¹⁴ Foster, 266.

McCarthy, Denis Florence (1817-1882)

McCarthy was born in Dublin where he later became a professor of English and published poetry¹⁵.

Morgan, Lady (Sydney Owenson) (1785-1859)

Lady Morgan was born in well-to-do family but when they came into hard times she was forced to become a governess. She was able to spend time with her cousins in Connaught where she learned Gaelic songs and dances. She began to publish at the turn of the century, with *The Wild Irish Girl* (1806) being the work that made her famous. She set up her own salon in the heart of Dublin which had the most prominent political and literary figures as regular patrons¹⁶. Included among her works published are her own memoirs.

Moore, Thomas: (1779-1852)

Moore was born in Dublin and is best known for publishing a series of music collections called *Irish Melodies* starting in 1808¹⁷. He had the reputation of being 'the' national poet (equal to the status of Robert Burns in Scotland).

O'Connell, Daniel (1775-1847)

Born in county Kerry, O'Connell was well educated in Ireland as well as France. His studies were in law and when admitted to the bar in Dublin in 1798 he tried to repeal British laws against the Catholics in Parliament. In 1823 he organized the Catholic Association which fought for the rights of the Catholic Irish. In 1829 he took a seat at the British House of Commons in county Clare. During a demonstration (1843) in favor of home rule, O'Connell was arrested and convicted of seditious conspiracy, but charge was later reversed.

O'Neill, Captain (Daniel) Francis (1848(9)-1936)

O'Neill was born in west Cork County to a well off educated father and he grew up in a largely Irish speaking rural community. His house was open for visiting travelling musicians. In addition to his family being good singers, and the parish had two professional pipers, he also took up the Irish flute. He settled in Chicago in 1871 where he collected Irish tunes and actively preserved Irish music in his two major works *Irish Folk Music* and *Irish Minstrels and Musicians*¹⁸.

¹⁵ Cleeves, *Fiction*, 80.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 94.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 93.

¹⁸ www.chiefoneill.com [cited October 2000].

Petrie, George (1773-1866)

As the son of a Dublin painter, he was also taught this skill. Petrie's interest lay in the antiquities of Ireland which resulted in the publication of several books about Ireland's land and architecture¹⁹. Since childhood Petrie collected tunes that he heard. He freely passed on his collected materials to Edward Bunting, Thomas Moore and Patrick Weston Joyce²⁰.

Swift, Jonathan (1667-1745)

Born in Dublin, Swift was a very influential member of the Irish elite. In addition to his novel *Gulliver's Travels* (1726) Swift was quite active in the publication of some political works expressing extreme opinions on the state of Ireland and the role of the peasantry²¹.

Tone, (Theobald) Wolfe (1763-1798)

Born in Dublin, Tone was educated at Trinity College where he became politically involved as the founder of Irish nationalism out of his frustration as an imperialist. He can be credited with the first nationalist pamphlet which came out in 1790. His interest was in achieving a "pure patriotism"²² and saw republicanism as the way to do this. He was captured, and committed suicide in 1798²³.

Waller, John Francis (1809-1894)

Waller was born in county Limerick, he published volumes of poems and served as an editor of *Dublin University Magazine*²⁴.

¹⁹ Neal Garnham, "Petrie, George", in *The Oxford Companion to Irish History*, 439-440.

²⁰ Johnson, 131.

²¹ Cleaves, *Fiction*, 130-1.

²² Foster, 175.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Cleaves, *Fiction*, 136.

Intelligentsia Groups of the Nineteenth-Century

Fenian Brotherhood ("The Brotherhood" or Fenianism)

A revolutionary group (part of a movement) that emerged among Irish immigrants in the United States after the collapse of the Young Ireland movement of the 1840s²⁵. The aim of the group was to help Ireland gain independence.

Irish Republican Brotherhood

This group was formed in 1858.

United Irishmen (Society of)

This group was established in Belfast in October and Dublin in November of 1791. The membership was mostly middle-class up to the gentry and the aristocracy. The aim of the group was to reform the parliament and take away the English control over Ireland²⁶. This group distributed propaganda in contemporary journals with the hope of gaining more support. The leadership of this group was under Wolfe Tone and later under Robert Emmet until 1803.

Repeal Association (movement)

By 1843 the Repeal Association had over two million members²⁷. This group were against violence and working within the system²⁸. Part of their program was to teach the people to read but this education was mostly political in nature²⁹.

Young Ireland(ers) (movement and political group)

There was an inseparable connection between the Young Irelanders (an activist group) and the political paper the *Nation*. This group was an active group from 1842-8³⁰. Support for this group came mostly from the Catholic clergy and those in Dublin³¹. The group was eventually disintegrated because of conflicts and

²⁵ James Loughlin, "Fenianism", in *The Oxford Companion to Irish History*, 189.

²⁶ Connolly, "United Irishmen, Society of", 567.

²⁷ Ned Lebow, *White Britain and Black Ireland: The Influence of Stereotypes on Colonial Policy* (Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1976), 6.

²⁸ Lebow, 10.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Connolly, "Young Ireland", 602.

³¹ Ibid., 603.

disagreements about group strategy. The ideologies of this group were romantic and included a conception of Ireland as an independent country with its own individuality separate from England.

APPENDIX 3

AN ACCOUNT OF IRISH DANCING IN A RURAL COMMUNITY

This account of Irish dance in a country community is taken from the story "The Midnight Mass" found in William Carleton's Traits and Stories of the Irish Peasantry (1830-3) Volume 1, pages 332, 340-343, 345.

"Barny [the travelling fiddler] was now silent for some time, which silence was produced by the industry he displayed in assailing the substantial refreshments before him. When he had concluded his repast he once more tasted the liquor...and continued playing their favourite tunes, and amusing them with anecdotes, both true and false, until the hour drew nigh when his services were expected by the young men and maidens who had assembled to dance in the barn.

The Irish dance, like every other assembly composed of Irishmen and Irish women, presents the spectators with those traits which enter into our conception of rollicking fun and broad humour. The very arrangements are laughable; and when joined to the eccentric strains of some blind fiddler like Barny *Dhal*, to the grotesque and caricaturish faces of the men, and the modest, but evidently arch and laughter-loving countenances of the females, they cannot fail to impress an observing mind with the obvious truth, that a nation of people so thoughtless and easily directed from the serious and useful pursuits of life to such scenes, can seldom be industrious and wealthy, nor, despite their mirth and humour, a happy people.

The barn in which they danced on this occasion was a large one. Around the walls were placed as many seats as could be spared from the neighbours' houses; these were eked out by sacks of corn laid length-wise, logs of round timber, old creels, iron pots with their bottoms turned up, and some of them in their usual position. On these were the youngsters seated, many of the "boys" with their sweethearts on their knees, the arms of the fair ones lovingly around their necks; and, on the contrary, many of the young women with their bachelors on their laps, their own necks also gallantly encircled by the arms of their admirers. Up in a corner sat Barny, surrounded by the seniors of the village, sawing the fiddle with indefatigable vigour, and leading the conversation with equal spirit. Indeed, his laugh was the loudest, and his joke the best; whilst, ever and anon, his music became perfectly furious—that is to say, when he rasped and fiddle with a desperate effort "to overtake the dancers", from whom, in the heat of the conversation, he had unwittingly lagged behind.

Dancing in Ireland, like everything else connected with the amusement of the people, is frequently productive of bloodshed. It is not unusual for crack dancers from opposite parishes, or from distant parts of the same parish, to meet and dance against each other for victory. But as the judges in those cases consist of the respective friends or factions of the champions, their mode of decision may readily be conjectured. Many a battle is fought in consequence of such challenges, the result usually being that not he who has the lightest heel, but the hardest head, generally comes off the conqueror.

While the usual variety of Irish dances—the reel, jig, fling, three-part-reel, four-part-reel, rowly-powly, country-dance, *cotillion*, or cut-along (as the peasantry call it), and minuet, vulgarly minion, and minionet—were going forward in due rotation, our readers may be assured that those who were seated around the walls did not permit the time to pass without improving it. Many an attachment is formed at such amusements, and many a bitter jealousy is excited: the prude and coquette, the fop and rustic Lothario, stand out here as prominently to the eye of him who is acquainted with human nature, as they do in similar assemblies

among the great: perhaps more so, as there is less art, and a more limited knowledge of intrigue, to conceal their natural character.

The dance in Ireland usually commences with those who sit next the door, from whence it goes round with the sun. In this manner it circulates two or three times, after which the order is generally departed from, and they dance according as they can. This neglect of the established rule is also a fertile source of discord; for when two persons rise at the same time, if there be not room for both, the right of dancing first is often decided by blows.

At the dance we are describing, however, there was no dissension; every heart appeared to be not only elated with mirth, but also free from resentment and jealousy. The din produced by the thumping of vigorous feet upon the floor, the noise of the fiddle, the chat between Barny and the little sober knot about him, together with the brisk murmur of the general conversation, and the expression of delight which sat on every countenance, had something in them elevating to the spirits.

Barny, who knew the voices, and even the mode of dancing peculiar to almost every one in the barn, had some joke for each. When a young man brings out his sweetheart—which he frequently does in a manner irresistibly ludicrous, sometimes giving a spring from the earth, his *caubeen* set with a knowing air on one side of his head, advancing at a trot on tip-toe, catching her by the ear, leading her out to her position, which is “to face the fiddler,” then ending by a snap of the fingers, and another spring, in which he brings his heel backwards in contact with his ham;—we say, when a young man brings out his sweetheart, and places her facing the fiddler, he asks her what she will dance; to which, if she has no favourite tune, she uniformly replies—“*Your* will is *my* pleasure.” This usually made Barry groan aloud.

When the youngster had danced for some time, the fathers and mothers of the village were called upon “to step out.” This was generally the most amusing scene in the dance. No excuse is ever taken on such occasions, for when they refuse, about a dozen young fellows place them, will they nil they, upright upon the floor, from whence neither themselves nor their wives permitted to move until they dance. No sooner do they commence, than they are mischievously pitted against each other by two sham parties, one encouraging the wife, the other cheering on the good man; whilst the fiddler, falling in with the frolic, plays in his most furious style. The simplicity of character, and, perhaps, the lurking vanity of those who are the butts of the mirth on this occasion, frequently heighten the jest.....

During stated periods of the night, those who took the most prominent part in the dance, got a plate and hat, with which they went round the youngsters, to make collections for the fiddler. Barny reserved his best and most sarcastic jokes for these occasions; for so correct was his ear, that he felt little difficulty in detecting those whose contributions to him were such as he did not relish.

The re-appearance of these rollicking and reckless young fellows in the dance, was hailed by all present; for their outrageous mirth was in character with the genius of the place. The dance went on with spirit; brag dancers were called upon to exhibit in hornpipes; and for this purpose a table was brought in from Frank’s kitchen, on which they performed in succession, each dancer applauded by his respective party as the best in the barn.”

See Illustration 3 for accompanying illustration.

APPENDIX 4

A COMPARISON OF THE TRAVELLING INSTRUMENTALIST VERSUS THE BALLAD SINGER

Although the travelling instrumentalist and the ballad singer were both travelling musicians they were some very significant differences that changed the way these men or women lived and shaped their performance practices. In the following chart the differences and similarities are outlined clearly.

DIFFERENCES	THE TRAVELLING INSTRUMENTALIST	THE BALLAD SINGER
Health	☒ Many are blind or afflicted with a physical ailment	☒ Most likely able bodied and healthy
Skill	☒ Requires three to four years training ☒ Livelihood depend on skills ☒ May be a part of a hereditary family of musicians ☒ Extensive musical ability required	☒ No amount of training is required to practice ☒ Livelihood depends on salesmanship over performance ability ☒ Need only ability to read broadsides or memorise them to sing
Options	☒ Music the only primary source of productive labour available	☒ Music was chosen because of profitability ☒ Could change to another line of work (e.g. labourer)
Service Provided	☒ Provide dance music for the entertainment of the people	☒ Provide broadside ballads for sale to the public
Patrons	☒ Almost exclusively the rural peasantry	☒ Urban or rural peasantry ☒ Income from printers and politicians
	☒ Give lessons	☒ Only sells music
Gender	☒ Almost exclusively male	☒ Includes both sexes
	☒ Work the whole year	☒ Temporary or seasonal work

SIMILARITIES	THE TRAVELLING INSTRUMENTALIST AND THE BALLAD SINGER
Supplementary Income	☒ Both combine with other sources of income
Venue	☒ Both attend patrons, fairs, market, and wakes

APPENDIX 5

ACCOUNTS OF THE BALLAD SINGER

The following are first hand accounts of travelling ballad singers

Denis Sheehan

Sheehan was arrested under the suspicion of spreading songs of seditious nature. This statement was taken in Dunmanway, county Cork on 4 May 1841.

"Last January twelve months I commenced ballad singing at **Thurles** in the county of Tipperary. The first song I sang and sold I got at a printer's called Bresnan, as well as I can recollect, at Thurles. It was called 'The Glories of Erin'... Upon that occasion I bought one shilling and sixpence worth, three dozen. I remained but two days at Thurles, and then went to **Cashel** in the county Tipperary. I bought there from Beregan, the printer, one pound's worth of ballads, which I got for four shillings. The songs I bought there were not seditious. I remain at Cashel one day, which was market day. From there I went to the town of **Tipperary**. I remained one day there and then proceeded to the City of **Limerick**. I remained in the city of Limerick four months before I left it. The first printer I bought songs from in the city of Limerick was Anthony Grogan, who resides at Denmark Street, Newtown Perry. I bought from him a seditious song called 'Shane Buoy'. I am aware that other ballads of seditious nature were bought from him by ballad singers, and that he is in the habit of printing such. I saw a ballad that a ballad singer who is a towny bought from him, called 'New Sheila na Guira', which was so seditious that I would not sing it. I often heard her, as well as other singers, singing it through the city, and other places. I heard it sung at Scariff in the county of Clare at a fair. There are three ballad singers who reside in Limerick. Their names are Thomas Welsh, who resides near the fever hospital in a back lane; Maurice Connell, who lives in Old Goal Street in English Town. The towny's name is Sally Williams, who lives at Irish Town near Garryowen. When I left Limerick I went to **Ennis** in the county of Clare. I remained at Ennis a week. I bought no ballads there. I went from Ennis to **Gort**, remained one night at Gort; there is no printer there. I went from thence to Loughrea in the county of Galway. I remained off and on between **Loughrea** and **Ballinsloe** for four or five market days. I went from Ballinasloe to **Athlone**—there is a printer there named Gaghan, from whom I bought ballads, which were not seditious, but I saw seditious ballads in his office. I saw 'Glories of Erin' there. I saw others there but I do not recollect the names. I went from Athlone to **Roscommon**, and remained there a day. I went from there to **Boyle** in the same county. I remained at Boyle two days, where I bought ballads from a widow who keeps a printing office. They were not seditious, but I heard from a one-armed ballad singer that he bought seditious songs, which I saw. There was high treason in them but I do not recollect the names. I heard him sing them on a market day in Roscommon town. I went from Boyle to **Tuam** in the county of Galway, where I remained four days. I went from Tuam to **Galway** town, where I remained a week.

I bought ballads from widow Connolly who keeps a printer's shop there. They were of a bad nature. I went from Galway to the October fair of **Ballinasloe**: I remained two days. I then went on to **Nenagh** where I remained three days, and bought (*Mur88*) ballads there. They were not seditious. I then returned to **Limerick**, where I remained until near the ensuing January. I then went to **Tralee** in the county of Kerry, where I married and remained six weeks, where I bought ballads from a printer named Goggin, which were not seditious, but I afterwards met with a ballad singer named Redmond Prendible, who told me he got ballads of a seditious nature there. From Tralee I came to **Macroom**, where I remained but one day. I went from there to **Cork** where I remained from Tuesday to Saturday. During the time that I pursued the ballad singing occupation I met numbers of Ballad singers. I have seen as many as fifteen in one fair. They always sing seditious songs. The young persons of the country in general preferred buying the seditious to any other. I was never arrested before this except at **Bandon**, where I was arrested, not for singing songs, but for collecting a crowd round me on the bridge. I sing these songs mainly for what I can make for them, and I never was urged by any person to do so. There is no pledge exacted from us by the printers when giving these ballads. The most I ever got or made by ballad singing in one day was one pound five shillings. I generally make about a pound a week."¹

William Davis

Davis was arrested in a lodging house in Lismore, country Waterford. He is described as being about thirty-five years old, standing at nearly six feet in height and with a stout build.²

"His former place of abode was Ballyhuskard, adjacent to Enniscorthy in the county of Wexford—but he has not been there for better than three years. Came last from Fermoy, and having seen to Cappoquin, returned to Lismore on the evening of the 13th August (1832) to get a lodging, intending to proceed to Waterford. Had been at the Fair of Affane. His manner of livelihood, has been for sometime past, selling speeches and ballads at fairs and markets—and formerly selling other articles—gridirons, etc. For the last two months he has sold nothing but ballads. Has no fixed place of residence since he left Ballyhuskard. Gives as a reason why he should not be committed, that he was **endeavouring to earn his bread**; wishing to do so in an honest manner; that he did not write any of the ballads—merely bought them from different places, Cork and other places, but does not know from whom, he stating that he would answer any questions regarding himself; but not respecting other persons"³.

¹ Maura Murphy, "The Ballad Singer and the Role of the Seditious Ballads in Nineteenth-Century Ireland: Dublin Castle's View," *Ulster Folklife* 25, no. 2, (1991), 88-89. Source: CSORP.OR, 1841, 6/7015

² *Ibid.*, 87-88.

³ *Ibid.*, 88. Source: CSORP.OR, 1832, L/1572

John Corral

Corral was arrested in Ahascragh in December 1843 for singing an offensive ballad.

"I am a native of the county of Clare. I have no certain place of abode. The last place I worked was about the town of Tipperary. It was then the 29th September. But (I) went from that to Cashel, Clonmel, Killenaule, Thurles, Roscrea, and several other places. From Roscrea I came to Banagher about a month ago, stopped one night there, and commenced ballad singing. **I began by singing love songs which did not take. I then purchased 22 dozen of the ballads I was singing when arrested.** From Banagher I went to Ballinasloe, Ahascragh, Castleblakney, Tuam and Loughrea, singing ballads. The man I bought the ballads from said they printed in Tuam."⁴

⁴ Ibid., 89. Source: CSORP.OR, 1842, 11/25003

APPENDIX 6

DESCRIPTION OF THE IRISH FAIR OR PATRON

This description of a fair or patron is taken from Thomas Crofton Croker's Researches in the South of Ireland (1824). The account is in the chapter "The River Lee" in county Cork.

"...turned towards the bank of the lake, where whiskey, porter, bread and salmon were sold in booths or tents resembling a gipsy encampment, and formed by means of poles or branches of trees meeting at angles, over which were thrown the proprietor's great coat, his wife's cloak, old blankets, quilts, and occasionally a little straw. Above the entrance of each was suspended the name of the owner, if he happened to possess a license; when this was not the case, a jug, a bottle, or pipe were displayed to indicate that spirits and porter might be had within, and not unfrequently were added a piece of ribbon, and an old shoe, the first to distinguish some popular party, the latter emblematic of dancing, to which amusement the loser orders of Irish are immoderately attached.

Almost every tent had its piper, and two or three young men and women dancing the jig, or a particular kind of dance, called the rinkafadah, which consists of movements by no means graceless or inelegant. The women invariably selected their partners, and when up to the man of their choice, to whom they freely presented their hand. After the dance was concluded, the men dropped a penny each, or, such as were inclined to display their liberality, something more, into an old hat which lay at the piper's feet, or in a hollow made in the ground for the purpose. The pipe, who seldom makes a moment's pause, continues playing, and another dance immediately commences. I recollect having seen, in Cork, a painting by Grogan, (a native artist,) of the breaking up of an Irish fair, in which he has happily expressed the ceaseless motion of the musician's fingers on such occasions by the introduction of a man holding a jug of porter to the piper's lips, which he drinks without interruption to the dance.

The tents are generally so crowded that the dancers have scarcely room for their performance: from twenty to thirty men and women are often huddled together in each, and the circulation of porter and whiskey amongst the various groups is soon evident in its effects. All become actors,--none spectators,--rebellious songs, in the Irish language, are loudly vociferated, and received with yells of applause: towards evening the tumult increases, and intoxication becomes almost universal. Cudgels are brandished, the shrieks of women and the piercing cry of children thrill painfully upon the ear in the riot and uproar of the scene; indeed the distraction and tumult of a patron cannot be described.¹"

¹ Thomas Crofton Croker, *Researches in the South of Ireland*, (Dublin, 1824), introduction by Kevin Danaher (reprint: Shannon: Irish University Press, 1969), 281-2.

GLOSSARY

Anglicism: This is the acceptance of the English language and their rule in addition to an appropriation of English customs and culture.

Bard: One of the Celtic order of poets or one who composed and recited epic or heroic poems. They often accompanied themselves on the harp.

Base: The "economic foundation of a society."¹

Big House: Before the late sixteenth century this term refers to the homes of the chiefs and his family on the chiefdom land. After this time the terms refers to well-to-do Large farmers (graziers) or landlords (or middlemen) that patronised musicians and other artisans.

Cauthic: A material of woven pith of rushes, the cap was a high conical hat which was in accordance with the folk customs of the day dating back several centuries.

Chachán: Refers to a group of farms of varying size clustered together in from three to forty properties.² In the nineteenth century clacháns were concentrated mostly in the west but were dispersed in other parts of the country.³ This cabin organisation was associated with the rundale system (see under *Rundale*).

Chiefdom: Consisted of a large track of land that had a large homestead (Big House) for the chieftain (or regional king) and his family to reside. The system of succession was dynastic. This organisation involved chieftains that ruled over territories, and claimed an overlordship over those on their land.⁴ There were two main divisions of chieftains that had different origins, the Old English and the Gaels. Before the arrival of the Normans, chieftains fought each other for land.

¹ Jorge Lorrain, "base and superstructure" in *A Dictionary of Marxist Theory*, edited by Tome Bottomore (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Publishers Limited, 1983), 43.

² James H. Johnson, *The Human Geography of Ireland* (Toronto: John Wiley & Sons, 1994), 45-6.

³ *Ibid.*, 46-7.

⁴ Donal O'Sullivan, *Carolan: The Life and Times and Music of an Irish Harper*, volume 1 (London: Routledge and Kegan Limited., 1958), 3.

Chieftain: The chief or regional king of a clan or a tribe.

Con Acre: This is a rented piece of land that is rented by member of the peasantry for the purpose of making their means of subsistence. Usually the crop were potatoes which were used to feed the peasant's family.⁵

Cottier: This is a labourer who worked for a farmer and instead of cash payment, he was given a cabin, a small plot of land (to grow crops to feed his family) and perhaps turf-cutting and grazing rights. The term was used to also refer to any holder of a small plot of land or the occupier of a cabin.⁶

Cromwellian Descent: This refers to the English that came to Ireland in 1652 with the Cromwellian settlement.

Crossroad Dances: These were dances that were held at a cross-road. A cross-road is a burying place for unbaptised children and animals but it was also a place where people had been said to meet the devil.⁷

Dance Master: An important figure in the first half of the nineteenth century. He travelled and catered to the rural Irish peasantry just like the itinerant musician. In fact some of these men played the fiddle or the flute to accompany his own and other's dancing.

Dry Cottier: This labourer only had a cottage and had to rent a separate small patch of land called a con acre to grow crops like potatoes and oats for his (and his family's) own consumption. Employment for these workers was also found in the linen or cottage industry.

English Pale: (also known as the Pale and the Old (English) Pale) is an area of land which included counties Dublin, Louth, Meath, and parts of Kildare where the English first gained control in the sixteenth century. It is here that the Anglo-Norman settlement is most dense⁸ and where English rule was its strongest.

⁵ S. J. Connolly, "conacre" in *The Oxford Companion to Irish History*, edited by S. J. Connolly (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 108.

⁶ Connolly, "cottier", 119-20.

⁷ Mary Murray Delaney, *Of Irish Ways* (New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 1973), 142.

⁸ F. H. A. Aalen, Kevin Whelan and Matthew Stout, eds., *Atlas of the Irish Rural Landscape* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 23, 25, 58, 60.

Fairs: Fairs were seasonal events that provided an atmosphere akin to *patron* celebrations. Starting as early as the ninth century,⁹ fairs were held once or twice a year on average. Although these venues were usually highly specialised there was little in the way of an organised infrastructure.¹⁰ In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries livestock fairs became the most prominent type of fair (pig fairs for example). The lack of structure of the fair left room for and promoted a liberal atmosphere that included musicians, artisans and people in the margins of this society. Fairs were not only a place for useful economical exchanges and making connections¹¹ but they could also get riotous.¹² Fairs were given more importance than markets because they involved the selling of specialised items like livestock. Farmers would plan their whole year of work based on the dates of fairs which most frequently occurred in May and October.¹³ Other less attended fairs occurred in February and March, and July and August.¹⁴

Freeholders: The owner of a freehold.

Freehold: A form of tenure for which an estate is held in fee for life or an estate inherited or held for life.

Grazier: These were men from the middle class that had a significant amount of land that was used for commercial agricultural or livestock production.

Hedge School: These were Catholic schools that were held in makeshift classrooms that took place in a barn or hedge. Because of strict penal laws forbidding the education of children in Catholic schools, there was a need to be secretive.¹⁵

Hedge Schoolmaster: These men were usually self-taught or scholars that received their education from different hedge schools. Like the travelling musician they were itinerant and set up schools in a cottage or some kind of edifice while staying in a

⁹ Anne O'Dowd, "Folklife and Folk Traditions", in *The Irish Countryside*, ed. Desmond Gillmor (Dublin: Wolfhound Press, 1989), 129.

¹⁰ Raymond Gillespie, "fairs and markets", in *The Oxford Companion to Irish History*, 184.

¹¹ Artelia Court, *Puck of the Droms: The Lives and Literature of the Irish Tinkers* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1985), 14.

¹² Gillespie, 185.

¹³ O'Dowd, 132.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 136.

¹⁵ Brendan Breathnach, *Folk Music and Dances of Ireland* (Dublin: Mercier Press, 1971. Reprint: Dublin: The Mercier Press, 1986), 50.

community member's home. Thomas Crofton Croker gives the following definition/description of the hedge schoolmaster.

"The highest class of scholars is composed of men as full grown, and often as old as the master himself, distinguished by the name of "poor scholars," or "strangers." These strangers are generally, the sons of reduced farmers and native of Ulster and Connaught, who, having swallowed all the classical information within their knowledge of Latin, and to acquire the Greek tongue."¹⁶

They were compensated for their skill with a modest fee or in kind from the parents of their pupils.¹⁷

Intermediate Landlords: (or Middlemen) These men worked for absentee landlords handling the renting out of their land. Middlemen essentially were responsible for the payment of a set fee to the landowner and for this were given control over the land to rent out as he pleased. They usually lived on the property and divided the land for different tenants or other lesser middlemen at a rent in which the middlemen would make a large profit. The land holdings rented out varied in size. Most of these men were Protestant being, in some cases, the sons of the gentry and yeomen.

Labourers: (bound and unbound) Bound labourers were engaged for a season of work on a farmer's land. He was provided with a cabin, and paid by the provision of food or land to grow his own crops. The unbound labourer was employed on a casual basis to work on a farm. He, like the dry cottier, was provided with a con acre.

Land Agents: With the eventual elimination of middlemen in the first part of the nineteenth century, land agents were used as a replacement. These men worked directly for the landowner and were responsible for the collection of the rents of the tenants.

Landowners: For the most part this class did not reside in Ireland. Their estates ranged from 100,000 to 10,000 acres owned by the nobility or the lesser gentry.¹⁸ By the early nineteenth century about ninety percent of the landowners were Protestants with English or Scottish roots.

Markets: Markets were usually weekly occurrences within an urban infrastructure involving a significant and substantial amount of sales and exchanges or trade.¹⁹ The exchanges

¹⁶ Thomas Crofton Croker, *Researches in the South of Ireland* (Dublin, 1824), introduction by Kevin Danaher (Reprint: Shannon: Irish University Press, 1969), 326.

¹⁷ Kenneth Milne, "hedge schools", in *The Oxford Companion to Irish History*, 238.

¹⁸ Liam Kennedy, "The Rural Economy, 1820-1914", in *An Economic History of Ulster, 1820-1939*, edited by Liam Kennedy and Phillip Ollerenshaw (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985), 31.

¹⁹ Gillespie, 184.

were on an economic, social and even political level.²⁰ Those men in higher social position like landlords and middlemen had direct control over the prices and they regulated markets through tolls and patents. This kind of regulatory action was taken to enforce and maintain social order within the venue.²¹

Middle-Class: This was an influential and distinguished group in Ireland. Protestant or Catholic, this class emerged in the eighteenth century. These men usually owned fairly large tracks of land that they used to raise livestock (graziers) or produce agricultural products.

Middlemen: (see Intermediate Landlords)

Milesians: This term is derived from Milesius (a Latinised name) who was said to have invaded and possessed Ireland a thousand years before Christ.

Normans: The first conquerors of Ireland in the twelfth century.

Old English: the descendants of the Anglo-Norman conquerors (the first conquerors from the twelfth thirteenth centuries) (Foster 8) (Swift 64), they inhabit mainly the towns and the Pale (Foster 12) Normans conquered Ireland in the twelfth century; had conquered England under William the Conqueror in 1066. This elite was of the Catholic denomination, like the natives of Ireland.

Pale (The): (see English Pale)

Patron: (or Pattern) a celebration of the feast day of a local (patron) saint. The day included religious activities followed by a fair-like atmosphere, which includes music, dancing, and other social activities. After parish disapproval of the increasingly celebrative form of this occasion (rather than religious), pattern declined and eventually ceased to be practised by the 1870s.²²

Pior Mor: War pipes used in battles to lead and encourage the troops (pre-seventeenth century).²³

²⁰ Adrian Randall, Andrew Charlesworth, Richard Sheldon and David Walsh, "Markets, Market Culture and Popular Protest in Eighteenth-Century Britain and Ireland" in *Markets, Market Culture and Popular Protest in Eighteenth-Century Britain and Ireland*, ed. Adrian Randall and Andrew Charlesworth (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1996), 12.

²¹ Ibid., 15.

²² Connolly, "pattern", 436.

²³ Captain Francis O'Neill, *Irish Minstrels and Musicians* (1913. Darby: Norwood Editions, 1973), 42.

Pipes: (uilleann or union pipes) These were the Irish version of bagpipes that developed in at the end of the eighteenth century. Instead of blowing into a pipe to supply air to the instrument, there was a bellow place under the right fore which pumped air.

Rundale: This is a form of community organisation that involves collective farming by extended families (kin) on a group owned land holding. The land was divided into strips that were then assigned to different families for a period of time before the land was re-assigned to another family in the community. The purpose of this rotation was to ensure that one family was not favoured by better land or made to work on a poorer soil area. This system of community and land division existed in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries but became unfeasible after the population forced out of necessity to extend land subdivision.²⁴ This system involves a cluster of houses in one area (*clachán*) while the land is around this cluster.

Senachie: This is an Irish storyteller.

Small Farmers: (or tenant farmer) The average landholding of the small farmer was ten acres, which they used to farm for their own means of subsistence and in many cases sublet to other tenants and house any labourers they required for their own agricultural pursuits. These men were also known as dwarf or peasant landlords which serves to describe their parallel with the landlord in the macrocosm of the land tenure and class system.

Social Elite: This was an elite group of educated people from a very small middle class population. In the first half of the nineteenth century they were mostly Protestant but the demographic changed to include Catholics after the Penal Laws were lifted in 1829.

Spailpín (or spalpeen): This is a migrant worker who usually works as a day labourer. They were usually from poorer regions and travelled east to more developed agricultural areas but still stayed within the country.²⁵

Superstructure: This involves the social aspect of a society built on "its material foundations and out of the corresponding social relations."²⁶

Travelling Instrumentalist: This refers to travelling musicians that play instruments (pipes and fiddle).

Travelling Musician: This category includes all types of musicians that travelled including pipers, fiddlers and ballad singers.

²⁴ Lindsay Proudfoot, "rundale", in *The Oxford Companion to Irish History*, edited by S. J. Connolly (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 43.

²⁵ Connolly, "seasonal migration", 504.

²⁶ Larrain, "base and superstructure", 42.

Wake: A pre-burial celebration that involves the gathering of relatives, friends and neighbours. It involves a night of drinking, singing, dancing and storytelling as a way of honouring the dead.²⁷

Yeoman: A person in a class of freeholders who were below the gentry in status.

²⁷ Connolly, "wake", 582.

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